THE COLLECTED WORKS OF

Chögyam Trungpa



Volume Two

THE PATH IS THE GOAL
TRAINING THE MIND
GLIMPSES OF ABHIDHARMA
GLIMPSES OF SHUNYATA
GLIMPSES OF MAHAYANA
SELECTED WRITINGS



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VOLUME ONE

Born in Tibet • *Meditation in Action* • *Mudra* • Selected Writings

VOLUME TWO

Glimpses of Abhidharma • *Glimpses of Mahayana* • *Glimpses of Shunyata* • *The Path Is the Goal* • *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness* • Selected Writings

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Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism • *The Heart of the Buddha* • *The Myth of Freedom* • Selected Writings

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VOLUME TWO

The Path Is the Goal

Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness

Glimpses of Abhidharma

Glimpses of Shunyata

Glimpses of Mahayana

Selected Writings

EDITED BY
Carolyn Rose Gimian



SHAMBHALA • *Boston & London* • 2003

Shambhala Publications, Inc.
Horticultural Hall
300 Massachusetts Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02115
www.shambhala.com

Page i: Chögyam Trungpa giving meditation instruction, 1971.
Photographer unknown. From the collection of the Shambhala Archives.

See pages 665–668 for a continuation of the copyright page.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

First Edition
Printed in the United States of America

♾ This edition is printed on acid-free paper that meets
the American National Standards Institute z39.48 Standard.
Distributed in the United States by Random House, Inc.,
and in Canada by Random House of Canada Ltd

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Trungpa, Chögyam, 1939–
[Works. 2003]
The collected works of Chögyam Trungpa / edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian; forewords
by Diana J. Mukpo and Samuel Bercholz.—1st ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 1-59030-025-4 (v.1: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-026-2 (v.2: alk. paper)—
ISBN 1-59030-027-0 (v.3: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-028-9 (v.4: alk. paper)—
ISBN 1-59030-029-7 (v.5: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-030-0 (v.6: alk. paper)—
ISBN 1-59030-031-9 (v.7: alk. paper)—ISBN 1-59030-032-7 (v.8: alk. paper)—
1. Spiritual life—Buddhism. 2. Buddhism—Doctrines. I. Gimian, Carolyn Rose. II. Title.

BQ4302.T7823 2003
294.3'420423—dc22 2003058963

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INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME TWO

VOLUME TWO OF *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa* comprises five books and thirty-four articles that, loosely speaking, concern themselves with the themes of meditation, mind, and mahayana, the "great vehicle" for the development of compassion and the means to help others. The books and the first thirteen articles provide the formal or doctrinal presentation of these topics. Then follow articles that show how these concepts can be applied in specific disciplines or situations of working with others, in dialogue with other spiritual communities, and in the juicy and varied situations that life presents. There are eight articles on psychology and working with others as a psychotherapist or health professional; six articles based on a dialogue with Christian contemplatives at the Christian-Buddhist Meditation Conferences held between 1981 and 1985 in Boulder, Colorado; an article on spiritual farming; another on work; one on sex; and four on the educational philosophy of Naropa Institute (now Naropa University), a liberal arts college founded by Trungpa Rinpoche.

If one were asked to identify a single cornerstone in Chögyam Trungpa's presentation of the Buddhist teachings, it would almost surely be the sitting practice of meditation. He was proud that his Tibetan lineage, the Kagyü, is known as the Practicing Lineage.[1] The first book that he

1. Trungpa Rinpoche's root guru, Jamgön Kongtrül, was a Nyingma teacher, so in some sense Chögyam Trungpa belonged to both the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages. However, his first and primary lineage was that of the Karma Kagyü, which frequently is called either the Practicing or the Practice Lineage. The Nyingma lineage is also known as a lineage of great practitioners of meditation.

published on Buddhism in England (aside from *Born in Tibet,* the memoir of his early training and escape from Tibet) was called *Meditation in Action.* From the time he arrived in North America in 1970 until his death in 1987, he almost never gave a public talk or started a seminar without a discussion of the importance of sitting practice. In the early years in North America, when he was stressing cynicism toward spiritual "trips" and overcoming spiritual materialism, he recommended the sitting practice of meditation. Later, when he introduced more formal discipline and the importance of lineage and devotion, he still recommended the sitting practice of meditation. Even when he was conducting an advanced program like the Vajradhatu Seminary or giving an empowerment for his most senior students, events always began with an extended period of sitting meditation. In the later years, when he presented the Shambhala path of the warrior, the fundamental discipline that he recommended was the sitting practice of meditation.

Meditation is emphasized in many of Trungpa Rinpoche's books written in the 1970s and '80s, and some aspects of the technique are presented in various volumes published during his lifetime. In the early years in North America, he stressed the importance of personal instruction in meditation and deliberately did not provide all the details of the technique in writing. As time went on, he became more willing to write about the technique itself. However, until the publication of *The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation* in 1995, there was no one book that focused solely on Chögyam Trungpa's presentation of meditation, giving both an overview of teachings and techniques related to the practice as well as discussing in more depth the experiences that arise from it. *The Path Is the Goal,* the first book in Volume Two of *The Collected Works*, does a great service in filling this gap. It is helpful to beginning and continuing practitioners alike in its detailed discussion of both *shamatha* and *vipashyana,* or mindfulness and awareness, the two fundamental aspects of sitting meditation, indeed of all practice. The editor, Sherab Chödzin Kohn, was one of Rinpoche's first editors in North America (the first book that he edited, *Mudra,* was published in 1972). Sherab's command of his craft is evident in *The Path Is the Goal,* particularly in the skill with which he shapes Chögyam Trungpa's words from raw transcript to finished book.

If meditation is the ground of Rinpoche's teaching, then the development of compassion and helping others is the working basis, or the path.

The next book in Volume Two is *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness*, a practice-oriented manual for the nurturing of loving-kindness (maitri) as the ground for developing true compassion (karuna). *Training the Mind* is a commentary by Chögyam Trungpa on *The Root Text of the Seven Points of Training the Mind* by Chekawa Yeshe Dorje. Trungpa Rinpoche worked intimately on the translation of the text over a number of years, with a group of his students who make up the Nālandā Translation Committee.[2] Following his death, the translation committee reviewed and revised the text, putting it into its final form for the book's publication.

The seven points of mind training consist of fifty-nine slogans that give us the practical means to understand both the view and the practice of mahayana Buddhism, or the bodhisattva's way of compassion. They are to be used as a form of both contemplation and postmeditation practice. Key to this instruction is the formal practice of tonglen, or "sending and taking," a meditation that works with the medium of breath, as does basic sitting meditation. The practice of tonglen is itself introduced as one of the slogans: "Sending and taking should be practiced alternately. These two should ride the breath."

Although he arrived in North America in 1970, Trungpa Rinpoche did not present this approach to mind training until 1975. Then, when he did introduce this practice at the Vajradhatu Seminary, it was given only to senior students with extensive grounding in both sitting meditation and the study of the Buddhist teachings. Later, he began introducing tonglen and slogan practice at an earlier stage in students' development, when they took the bodhisattva vow to commit themselves to working for the benefit of others. Eventually, tonglen practice was introduced into various training programs at Naropa Institute, primarily in the psychology program, and it was then made available to participants in the Christian-Buddhist contemplative conferences at Naropa. Tonglen has been used

2. When Trungpa Rinpoche first introduced slogan practice to his students in 1975, he relied on the translation of this text done in the early 1970s by Ken McLeod. This translation was published, together with a commentary on the slogans by Jamgön Kongtrül the Great, as *A Direct Path to Enlightenment.* Rinpoche praised Ken McLeod's work but felt that, for the use of his students and in the context of the teachings he gave, he wanted to undertake his own translation of the text. In the preface to the 1987 edition of *The Great Path of Awakening,* a later version of McLeod's translation of the slogans and the commentary, he mentions Chögyam Trungpa's influence on his translation work and his appreciation for the teachings Trungpa Rinpoche gave on this material.

in a number of other contexts within the communities that Chögyam Trungpa founded, and it is studied and practiced in many other Buddhist communities. One of Rinpoche's students, Pema Chödrön, has played a major role in popularizing these teachings through her own writings.

Slogan practice, and in particular the practice of tonglen, make up what is meant by mind training here. These teachings, which were brought to Tibet by the great Indian adept Atisha, came into the Kagyü lineage through Gampopa, who studied this school of Kadam teachings before he became a disciple of the great Tibetan yogi Milarepa. Chögyam Trungpa himself received these teachings from his root guru Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen, whose predecessor Jamgön Kongtrül the Great wrote a famous commentary on these slogans, titled *The Great Path to Awakening* (referred to in footnote 2). As Judith L. Lief, the book's editor, says in her foreword: "The study and practice of these slogans is a very practical and earthy way of reversing ego-clinging and of cultivating tenderness and compassion." This practice literally stands ego on its head, reversing our normal tendency to ward off pain and draw in pleasure. The practice encourages us to take on the pain of others, as well as to accept our own, and to radiate wakefulness and kindness to others and into the environment in general. However, although the practice involves taking on pain, it is not at all masochistic; rather it is heroic, overcoming one's own obstacles as well as those of others, transforming them by accepting them fully—yet treating them in a very ordinary or straightforward way.

Chögyam Trungpa presented these teachings over a number of years, primarily at the Vajradhatu Seminaries, annual three-month periods of advanced training and study for his senior students. Mrs. Lief, one of Trungpa Rinpoche's senior editors and the director of the Dharma Ocean Series (a project aimed at compiling, editing, and publishing 108 volumes of the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa), took all the commentaries and condensed the material into *Training the Mind.* Another of Rinpoche's editors, Sarah Coleman, had worked on the original draft of this material during the author's lifetime and met with him several times to clarify and expand his commentary on particular slogans. Mrs. Lief reports that Trungpa Rinpoche "very much wanted this material out there and asked about it continually. It took years to complete. Crucial notes on some of the slogans disappeared and only by chance turned up in an obscure notebook at the bottom of a box hidden in my attic as the book

was nearing completion." She began working on the book in the 1970s, and it was finally published in 1993.

Judith Lief's work with this material has not just been in the editorial realm. She was in charge of the practice and study departments at many of the seminaries where these teachings were presented, and often worked on this material there with the students and the teachers. She has herself taught many programs on these points of mind training. Her grasp shows both in the way the book flows and in her introductory remarks. Her intimacy with the material helps to bring both depth and accessibility to its presentation.

For many years, the Nālandā Translation Committee has made available a set of four- by six-inch cards[3] printed with the fifty-nine mind training slogans. Many of Trungpa Rinpoche's students own a set, and the cards will often be found displayed somewhere in the practitioner's house—in the room set aside for meditation practice, or perhaps in the kitchen or on a shelf in the living room or study. They offer pithy and perky advice, which catches your attention and makes you think twice: "Don't be frivolous." "Drive all blames into oneself." "Don't act with a twist." One never knows where a slogan might pop up, a reminder that it is always possible to turn ego upside down, exchanging self-interest for concern for others. One can wholeheartedly recommend the use of this book—and the slogan cards—as a handbook for self-examination and a guide to applying wakeful kindness in everyday life.

The other three books included in Volume Two offer a glimpse of varied teachings on the Buddhist path. In fact, they are all part of what is called the "Glimpses" series: *Glimpses of Abhidharma*, *Glimpses of Shunyata*, and *Glimpses of Mahayana*. (The fourth in this series, *Glimpses of Space*, is found in Volume Six of *The Collected Works*.) Each volume is based on a single seminar taught by Chögyam Trungpa. *Glimpses of Abhidharma* is an examination of the five skandhas, or constituents of ego, and how we build up this illusory fortress of self in every moment

3. *The Seven Points of Training the Mind* is published as a set of two-color, four- by six-inch cards and as a wall poster. These products are available in the United States through Samadhi Store, (800) 331-7751, www.samadhistore.com, and through Zigi Catalog, (303) 661-0034, ziji@csd.net; in Canada through Drala Books and Gifts, (902) 422-2504; and in Europe through Alaya, (49) 6421-94088, alaya@ePost.de. The slogan cards are also available from the Nālandā Translation Committee, 1619 Edward Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3H9, Canada.

of our existence. The abhidharma, literally the "special teaching," represents a very early and seminal compilation of Buddhist philosophy and psychology. It is a codification and interpretation of the concepts that appear in the discourses of the Buddha and his major disciples.

In this brief look at some of the teachings from the abhidharma, Trungpa Rinpoche discusses the place of coincidence (*tendrel* in Tibetan; *pratitya-samutpada* in Sanskrit), which describes the karmic patterns that exist in our lives. He describes one's discovery of karmic coincidence not as predestination but as an opportunity to discover the reality, not only of one's karmic patterns, but also of freedom and the need to make a leap of faith in choosing the next moment that presents itself to us. The core material presented in *Glimpses of Abhidharma* is the investigation of the five skandhas, or constituents of ego. Trungpa Rinpoche takes a somewhat unusual approach to the discussion of the skandhas. Of his presentation of abhidharma, he himself says, "So our approach has been quite unique. . . . Looking at abhidharma this way, nothing is terribly abstract. . . . The psychology of one's own being shows the operation of the five skandhas and the whole pattern that they are part of. Most studies of abhidharma tend to regard the five skandhas as separate entities. As we have seen, this is not the case; rather they constitute an overall pattern of natural growth or evolution. . . . The fundamental point of abhidharma is to see the overall psychological pattern rather than, necessarily, the five thises and the ten thats. This kind of primary insight can be achieved by combining the approaches of the scholar and the practitioner."[4]

Glimpses of Shunyata (Vajradhatu Publications, 1993) and *Glimpses of Mahayana* (Vajradhatu Publications, 2001), both edited by Judith Lief, are good complements to *Training the Mind*, in that they present an overview of the basic teachings of mahayana, a view of the dharmic landscape in which the practice of mind training takes place. *Glimpses of Shunyata* is a very atmospheric presentation of lectures on shunyata, or emptiness, given by Trungpa Rinpoche in 1972 at Karmê Chöling, a rural practice

4. Pp. 310–11. *Glimpses of Abhidharma*, the first book that Judith Lief worked on with Trungpa Rinpoche, was originally published in 1975 by the Vajradhatu Press, the forerunner of Vajradhatu Publications; it was picked up by Prajña Press, an imprint of Shambhala Publications, in 1978; in 1987 Shambhala Publications published *Glimpses of Abhidharma* in Shambhala Dragon Editions. It is now in the series of Shambhala Classics published by Shambhala Publications.

center in Vermont. Rinpoche doesn't give his audience any ground in the discussion of shunyata, and this book conveys that groundlessness. In order to discover the ground, path, and fruition of shunyata, the reader has to give up territory, abandon hope, and take this journey without expectation. *Glimpses of Mahayana,* on the other hand, conveys the warmth and solid beingness of the mahayana. It makes you want to be a bodhisattva, a mahayana warrior treading the path of empty but luminous compassion, and it makes the mahayana path seem accessible. Buddha nature is right there, right here in this volume of teachings.

"An Approach to Meditation," published in the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* in 1974, is the first article reprinted in Volume Two of *The Collected Works.* Trungpa Rinpoche had a close relationship with the group of therapists based in Palo Alto, California, that established this journal in 1969. The phrase "transpersonal psychology" first came into currency around the time the journal was launched. Guided by the work of psychologists Abraham Maslow and Anthony Sutich and their colleagues, this new field was founded on a commitment to open-ended inquiry, experiential and empirical validation, and a values-oriented approach to human experience. When he was teaching in California in the 1970s, Chögyam Trungpa often lectured to a group of these psychologists at their center, or some of them would attend his Buddhist seminars in the Bay Area. Rinpoche was especially close with and very fond of Tony Sutich and had great respect for his pioneering work in transpersonal psychology.

One of the founding editors of the journal, Sonja Margulies, edited "An Approach to Meditation," which is based on a talk given by Rinpoche at the 1971 conference of the Association for Humanistic Psychology in Washington, D.C. It is among his most straightforward, thorough, and clear presentations of the ground of meditation, both theory and practice. A very different but equally well-crafted presentation is "Taming the Horse, Riding the Mind," edited by Susan Szpakowski and reprinted from the first issue of the *Naropa Magazine,* published in 1984. Mrs. Szpakowski based the article on "Educating Oneself without Ego," a seminar given by Trungpa Rinpoche at Naropa in the summer of 1983. The language and metaphors that Rinpoche employs here are rich and poetic, as is the practice he describes. The next article is a brief, delightful talk to young people, "How to Meditate," given by Chögyam Trungpa in 1979 and reprinted from the *Shambhala Sun* magazine.

The next eight articles all present further teachings (as contrasted with the *application* of the teachings, which comes later) on the topics of mind, meditation, and mahayana—which are the primary topics of the material in this volume. Four articles present topics from the abhidharma on the constituents of mind and how these come together in the situational patterns we experience in life. "The Spiritual Battlefield," reprinted from the *Shambhala Sun*, is based on a talk given at Naropa Institute in 1974 about how meditation works with the five skandhas, the building blocks or formative processes of ego, and with sem, lodrö, and rikpa, which are particular aspects of mind and intellect. "The Birth of Ego," reprinted from the *Halifax Shambhala Center Banner*, is based on a talk given in 1980 as part of a seminar titled "Conquering the Four Maras." The maras are enemies of or obstacles to egolessness, and one of them is itself called skandha mara. Since it is the five skandhas that make up ego, it is quite understandable that a seminar on the maras would deal with the birth and development of ego and how the confusion of neurosis can be transformed or conquered.

"The Wheel of Life: Illusion's Game" is another early article, from *Garuda II*.[5] This is the only published teaching in which Trungpa Rinpoche gives an in-depth description of the twelve nidanas, which he calls "the evolutionary stages of suffering." Therefore, even though this piece has some confusing passages and questionable editorial interpretations, it is included in *The Collected Works* for its graphic descriptions of the different phases of human experience. Many of the articles from *Garuda I* and *II* were reworked for inclusion in other publications, so that the final versions that appeared in print were free of the editorial errors they contained in their original versions. Two chapters of *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, for example, were based on material in the early *Garudas*. The original pieces were admirable in terms of their breadth and the energy behind the articles, but they contained substantive misinterpretations, perhaps reflecting a lack of training or experience on the part of some of the editors who worked on these early publications.

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5. The five issues of *Garuda* magazine were produced from 1970 to 1978. The first two were published in-house by Chögyam Trungpa's communities in the United States; the remaining three were a joint venture with Shambhala Publications. The magazines combined edited transcripts of teachings given by Rinpoche with talks by his senior students or guest contributors, such as Herbert V. Guenther, as well as information on the spiritual life of the community.

"Seven Characteristics of a Dharmic Person" is reprinted from the *Vajradhatu Sun*, the community newspaper that predated the *Shambhala Sun* magazine. This article originally appeared as a chapter in the 1979 *Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts* of the Vajradhatu Seminary, published by Vajradhatu Publications. While the four previous articles look at the constituent parts of our psychology, here there is a view of the whole person who is practicing the buddhadharma and of the qualities one can develop to lead a dharmic life. As Trungpa Rinpoche says, "When someone's mind is mixed with dharma, properly and fully, when a person becomes a dharmic person, you can actually see the difference . . . that is a fundamental point: we are trying to be genuine. We are trying to do everything properly, precisely the way the Buddha taught."[6]

The next two articles, "Dharmas without Blame" and "Buddhadharma without Credentials," are both from *Garuda III: Dharmas without Blame*. They are, one might say, a proclamation of basic sanity that does not need reference points. They are also a scathing condemnation of spiritual materialism and what Chögyam Trungpa refers to as "counterfeiting the teachings." He says that dharmas are without blame because "there was no manufacturer of dharmas. Dharmas are simply what is. Blame comes from an attitude of security, identifying with certain reservations as to how things are. Having this attitude, if a spiritual teaching does not supply us with enough patches, we are in trouble. The Buddhist teaching not only does not supply us with any patches, it destroys them." These two evocative pieces begin to move us from the ground of hinayana, where we are intimately examining the various aspects of our psychology and practicing a narrow discipline, toward the open way of the mahayana and the appreciation of shunyata, or emptiness, as well as the Madhyamika teachings which refute any adherence to ego's territory.The next article, "Compassion," reprinted from the *Vajradhatu Sun*, presents one of the talks on mind training that was used as the basis for *Training the Mind*. It is interesting to read one of the original talks and be privy to the dialogue between the teacher and his students, which is included here. Next is "The Lion's Roar," originally published in the *Shambhala Sun*. It is about the workability of the emotions and of every situation we come across in life. (Some of the material included in this article also appeared in a chapter by the same name in *The Myth of Free-*

6. 1979 *Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, p. 12.

dom and the Way of Meditation.) The discussion of working with depression is particularly potent; Rinpoche takes the view that, when related to fully, depression becomes a walkway rather than a dead end.

"The Lion's Roar" and the following article, "Aggression," provide a bridge to the next group of writings, which present a discussion of Buddhism and Western psychology. In "Aggression," Trungpa Rinpoche talks about how a basic emotional stance, deep-seated anger and resentment, can prevent us from knowing ourselves and from identifying with the dharma, or the teaching of "what is."

From his earliest days in the West, Chögyam Trungpa seemed to sense that, in communicating fully with Westerners, the language of psychology would be more appropriate than the language of religion. Thus, he translated the Sanskrit *atman* as "ego," whereas previously it had often been translated as "soul." As mentioned in the introduction to Volume One of *The Collected Works,* his use of the word *egolessness* merited a mention in the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary.* Chögyam Trungpa often talked about the achievement of egolessness rather than stressing nirvana, which could be confused with the Western concept of heaven. He talked about such themes as doubt, trust, depression, anxiety, and neurosis—all highly unconventional for Buddhism at this point in time. His use of psychological terminology and themes may well be viewed, in the long run, as one of his major contributions to the development of Buddhism in the West. Psychological vocabulary as a vehicle to express the deepest truths of Buddhism is now commonplace, taken for granted by readers and practitioners. But it was anything but the norm at the time that Rinpoche went to England and then journeyed on to America.

Students were often attracted to him and his presentation of the Buddhist teachings in part because of the language that he used. By using a psychological vocabulary, he did attract therapists and psychologists, to be sure, but he also drew many readers and listeners who were simply interested in psychology or may themselves have been in therapy when they met him or at some previous time. For many, it was easier to relate to him than to other Buddhist teachers because he was using a language that was more the currency of their culture: they more easily saw the world in psychological rather than religious terms. That constituency was quite broad, and a very different group from those attracted to Buddhism primarily as a religion. He (along with Tarthang Tulku in Califor-

nia) was one of the first Tibetan Buddhist teachers to reach that group, although it was by no means his only audience. Beyond that, his use of psychological terminology helped Westerners in general to realize that Buddhist meditation was not a religious discipline as such, having nothing to do with God, and that the Buddhist teachings were concerned with *human* experience, not the relationship between human beings and the divine. Emma McCloy Layman reports that when she asked him in a 1972 interview about the future of Buddhism in America, he replied that "It is scientific and practical, so is ideal for the Western mind. If it becomes a Church it will be a failure; if it is spiritual practice it will have strong influence in all areas—art, music and psychology."[7]

Chögyam Trungpa was also interested in the practice of therapeutic disciplines. In 1970 he and Shunryu Suzuki Roshi met and talked about the future of Buddhism in America, a relationship cut painfully short by Roshi's death in late 1971. During a meeting in May 1971, they talked about establishing a therapeutic community and a practice to work with the mentally ill. They both agreed that Buddhism in America, at least in the early days, was going to attract many individuals who would need such help.[8]

As early as 1971, Chögyam Trungpa began to put together plans for a therapeutic community to work with disturbed individuals. Judith Lief reports that when she moved to Boulder in 1972, "there were two basic 'clubs' one could join [among Trungpa Rinpoche's students]: the psychology group (Maitri group) and the theatre group (Mudra group)."[9] The psychology group, she says, studied the transcripts and tapes from two seminars on the bardos, or states of mind associated with the six realms of being, which Mrs. Lief edited into *Transcending Madness* in 1992. That book is included in Volume Six of *The Collected Works*. In that volume, readers will also find *Orderly Chaos*, which is based on two seminars on the mandala principle. Mrs. Lief reports that this was also study material for the psychology group, along with material on the five buddha families, or five styles of neurotic behavior (as well as of enlightenment

7. Emma McCloy Layman, *Buddhism in America* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1976), p. 102.

8. Chögyam Trungpa describes this meeting in "Space Therapy and the Maitri Community." Also see the discussion in "Planting the Dharma in the West," the 1976 epilogue to *Born in Tibet*.

9. For information on the Mudra Theatre Group, see the introduction to Volume Seven.

in vajrayana Buddhism), which are discussed in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (see Volume Three of *The Collected Works*) and in *Journey without Goal* (Volume Four). The Maitri group also "studied therapies such as Japan's Morita therapy and the therapeutic models of people like Maxwell Jones."[10]

Mrs. Lief describes the other training that the group received from Trungpa Rinpoche, as well as the formation of the Maitri community:

> Rinpoche taught us a method of scanning people to diagnose their main buddha families, based on energy coming from various parts of their bodies. He taught us to distinguish this energy from heat. (We were not that great at this.) I remember we also practiced this technique for diagnosis of pain. . . . There was also much discussion of creating a Zen-like therapeutic community based on living simply and basically and practicing together. About that time, George Marshall donated a house in Upstate New York near Elizabethtown for the purpose of starting the initial community.
>
> Then, the summer of 1973, there were two major conferences in Boulder: the Psychology Conference and the Theater Conference. It was at the Psychology Conference that Rinpoche presented the idea of postures and rooms [connected with the five buddha families] . . . which became Maitri Space Awareness. It was quite shocking at the time. . . . As we explored this new practice, we began to see that the five postures and rooms of Maitri Space Awareness provided us with a powerful methodology for deepening our understanding of the five buddha family mandala, and other aspects of Buddhist psychology that we had been studying for many years.
>
> The Maitri project was put under the direction of Narayana [later the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin] at first, and later under Chuck Lief. The original staff went out to Elizabethtown in 1973. . . . The basic set-up was to have one or two "clients" at a time and about eight to ten staff. Not all clients were Buddhists; in fact most were not. Supposedly (and this is one of the problems), clients were screened before coming to Maitri to ensure that they were borderline disturbed rather than psychotic. It seems that this screening did not always work. . . . When someone arrived, we would scan them [based on the training received from Rinpoche] and diagnose them in order to

10. From remarks by Judith L. Lief, letter to Carolyn Gimian, February 2002.

> determine which [Maitri Space Awareness] posture they should do. The staff would meditate before wake-up. . . . The clients did two sessions of postures a day and apart from that shared in general household chores. At the same time, we were constructing the first set of Maitri rooms, working on the house, etc. There was very little money . . . it was very basic.

After some months of working with mentally ill clients at Maitri, the staff concluded that they weren't ready to cope with this degree of neurotic upheaval and that they needed more training themselves. As Mrs. Lief reports:

> One client, described to us as mildly disturbed, in fact had not talked to anyone for almost a year. When we diagnosed him . . . and had him begin the posture, in less than two days, he started talking and did not stop. He got more and more riled up, rather violent, and eventually we had to send him home. That was one of the cases that led us to think we might need to focus on staff training more than treatment for a while.
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> In 1974, Lex Hixon donated a beautiful piece of property on the New York–Connecticut border near Wingdale, New York. . . . So we all got ready to move down there. We took the nearly completed Maitri rooms apart piece by piece so that we could reconstruct them when we got to Wingdale. When we first moved to Wingdale we still had a client, but soon after reconstructing the new building, which was visited and blessed by His Holiness the Karmapa himself, the decision was made to run training programs for psychologists and meditators, instead of maintaining Maitri as a therapeutic community. This went on for several years. Eventually, in 1978, this property was sold and the proceeds were designated to Naropa Institute.[11]

None of Chögyam Trungpa's lectures on Maitri Space Awareness have yet been published. However, Volume Two of *The Collected Works* includes "Space Therapy and the Maitri Community," an article written in 1974 but apparently never published. An excellent overview of this approach, as originally conceived, is provided by Marvin Casper in his article "Space Therapy and the Maitri Project," which was published in

11. Ibid.

the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* in 1974. It is reprinted in the appendix to Volume Two. After 1978, although the Maitri therapeutic community faded away, Maitri Space Awareness practice was integrated into the clinical psychology program at Naropa Institute. Since Rinpoche's death, Maitri Space Awareness has also been developed into a series of workshops for connecting with one's innate wisdom energies.

Overall, Chögyam Trungpa found that there was a great deal of interest in bringing together insights from Buddhism with the Western psychological disciplines. When Naropa Institute opened in 1974, contemplative psychology was one of the areas of study from the beginning. As Mrs. Lief reports:

> . . . a master's degree in Buddhist and Western psychology was developed as a method of training clinical psychologists, with the hope that in the future, such training would be put to use in a variety of models, such as the therapeutic community. Dr. Ed Podvoll was a pivotal figure in the development of this program. This program, which later was known as the Department of Contemplative Psychotherapy, combined Maitri Space Awareness Training, meditation practice, the study of Buddhist and Western psychology, and internships in therapeutic settings. The department published several issues of the *Journal of Contemplative Psychology*.[12] . . . Today, Naropa has a set of Maitri rooms, and Maitri Space Awareness practice is offered not only in the psychology programs there but in the arts and in education as well.
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> Many eminent psychologists taught at Naropa at one time or another, including Gregory Bateson, R. D. Laing, and Maxwell Jones, who taught at Naropa Canada—an offshoot in the 1980s.

Chögyam Trungpa's involvement with and influence on psychology and psychotherapy go considerably beyond what is discussed here. From 1977 to 1990, Edward Podvoll, M.D. (Lama Mingyur), was the director of the Contemplative Psychology Program at Naropa (for more information, see his excellent book on Buddhism and psychotherapy, originally published as *The Seduction of Madness*, soon to be reissued in an expanded edition under the title *Recovering Sanity*). Trungpa Rinpoche and Ed Pod-

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12. A number of the articles on Buddhist psychology that appear in Volume Two of *The Collected Works* were published in this journal.

voll had a rich and multifaceted relationship and collaboration, and Dr. Podvoll contributed to the editing of a number of the articles on psychology authored by Chögyam Trungpa and included in Volume Two. Chögyam Trungpa's writings on psychology will be published in a forthcoming book, *Mind, Meditation, and Psychology,* with additional information on the psychology program at Naropa and Chögyam Trungpa's involvement with Western psychology.

Dr. Podvoll and a number of his Naropa students initiated Windhorse, an intensive one-on-one residential program for psychotic individuals. In addition to the Windhorse program in Boulder, there are now groups in Northampton, Massachusetts; Vienna; and Zurich. In an e-mail about various developments in Buddhist psychology, Dr. Podvoll told me the history of the article "The Meeting of Buddhist and Western Psychology," which appears in Volume Two: "The article developed by our asking [Trungpa Rinpoche] questions, and his responses were then transcribed and edited down to an article for the *Naropa Psychology Journal.* While I was leaving his office after this interview, he said to me, 'I think we have a revolution on our hands—you should think of it like that.' "

Dr. Podvoll also reported: "About a year after the passing of Trungpa Rinpoche, Jamgön Kongtrül Rinpoche [the third] hosted a conference at Columbia University on Buddhism and Psychotherapy. He told all of us presenters that 'This would be a much different conference if Trungpa Rinpoche were with us, but we must keep on going with what he began.' "

Indeed, it appears that many practitioners of psychotherapy are continuing to join together the insights and practice of Buddhist meditation with their training in Western psychology. As Dr. Podvoll reports, "This 'movement' of psychotherapists of all kinds who are now willing to be educated in Buddhist mind-training is something of a cultural explosion. I know of about five groups in Germany alone, all working with different dharma teachers, as well as a couple in Austria, also in the Netherlands, and now it is happening in two groups in France, and so on."

Yet Chögyam Trungpa also had misgivings about Buddhism and the sitting practice of meditation being coopted or re-visioned as therapy. In "Is Meditation Therapy?" based on a 1974 talk, he makes it clear that there are important distinctions between the two disciplines: "Meditation is not therapy. It goes beyond therapy, because therapy involves

conforming to some particular area of relative reference. The practice of meditation is the experience of totality."

However, Rinpoche did not dismiss the idea of a therapeutic approach that would bring together Buddhist and Western understandings. In "Becoming a Full Human Being," he argues for a definition of health based on buddha nature and suggests a therapeutic model in which spontaneity and humanness are extended to others, based on the natural human capacity for warmth and caring. In "The Meeting of Buddhist and Western Psychology," he goes further. He talks about incorporating the Buddhist tradition of abhidharma into Western psychology, by exploring in detail how the mind evolves and functions. He argues once again for a definition of health based on innate goodness and concludes that what is missing in Western psychology, from the viewpoint of the Buddhist psychological tradition, is "the primacy of immediate experience," which, he says, could revolutionize Western psychology.

The importance in a therapeutic context of an uplifted physical environment, as well as a psychological environment of openness and warmth, is the subject of "Creating an Environment of Sanity," originally published in the *Naropa Journal of Psychology*. Trungpa Rinpoche talks at greater length about these themes in "Intrinsic Health: A Conversation with Health Professionals," which was published by the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. "From a Workshop on Psychotherapy" presents a dialogue with health professionals and therapists at the first session of Naropa, originally published in *Loka 2* in 1975.

"Space Therapy and the Maitri Community" (mentioned previously in the discussion of the history of Maitri and Space Awareness) is the next offering in Volume Two. Trungpa Rinpoche discusses the development of ego and neurosis in terms of the five skandhas and the five buddha families, and he then gives some background on the development of the Maitri community, paying homage to Suzuki Roshi and thanking him for instigating this idea. This article was written very early on in the Maitri experience—before the Maitri staff had concluded that working with highly neurotic and psychotic individuals was beyond their abilities. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating account by the founder of Maitri Space Awareness. This is the first time this article has ever been published.

The final article in the "psychological" grouping, "Relating with Death," is based on a talk from a seminar on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* given in 1971. Working with death and dying is a topic of great impor-

tance to the community of health workers. However, the audience for this article goes far beyond those with a professional interest. Rinpoche gave this talk when one of his students was gravely ill. He was in Vermont and was about to fly to Colorado to be with her. She died soon after their meeting. The poignancy of that situation is perhaps part of what made this such a compelling talk. "Relating with Death" is a very immediate discussion of being with a dying person and how to be helpful to him or her.[13]

The next group of articles is based on Trungpa Rinpoche's participation in the Christian-Buddhist Meditation conferences held at Naropa in the 1980s. Four excerpts are from *Speaking of Silence: Christians and Buddhists on the Contemplative Way,* edited by Susan Szpakowski. The fifth was a dialogue titled "Comparing the Heart" with the Right Reverend Thomas Keating, a Trappist abbot now living in Snowmass, Colorado. It appeared originally in the *Naropa Magazine,* also edited by Mrs. Szpakowski. These articles show us how a contemplative approach to meditation and mind is shared by practitioners in both the Buddhist and Christian traditions and how the similarities and differences between the traditions can stimulate authentic communication.

Trungpa Rinpoche greatly admired the Christian contemplative tradition. He immersed himself in the study of Christianity at Oxford University in the 1960s, and he never lost his respect for the depth and majesty of that spiritual tradition. While at Oxford, he wanted to take Holy Communion in the Church of England, in order to experience the inner spirituality of Christianity. However, since he wasn't a candidate for conversion, it was not possible. He was genuinely disappointed.

When Rinpoche traveled to Asia in 1968, he met Father Thomas Merton, shortly before Merton's untimely death. The meeting had a great effect on Rinpoche. In the dedication to *Speaking of Silence,* both Chögyam Trungpa's comments on his encounter with Merton and Merton's own reflections on their meeting in the *Asian Journal* are quoted. In a sense, their meeting may have been the spark that years later led Chögyam Trungpa to inaugurate the Christian-Buddhist dialogues at Naropa. Rinpoche commented:

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13. Another article related to death and dying, "Acknowledging Death," was included in *The Heart of the Buddha* and is found with that book in Volume Three. Material directly related to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is included in Volume Six of *The Collected Works.*

> Father Merton's visit to Southeast Asia took place when I was in Calcutta. . . . I had the feeling that I was meeting an old friend, a genuine friend. In fact, we planned to work on a book containing selections from the sacred writings of Christianity and Buddhism. We planned to meet either in Great Britain or in North America. He was the first genuine person I met from the West. After meeting Thomas Merton, I visited several monasteries in Great Britain, and at some of them I was asked to give talks on meditation, which I did. . . . I was very impressed and moved by the contemplative aspect of Christianity, and by the monasteries themselves. Their lifestyle and the way they conducted themselves convinced me that the only way to join the Christian tradition and the Buddhist tradition together is by means of bringing together Christian contemplative practice with Buddhist meditative practice.[14]

Merton's own commentary shows an equally great appreciation on his side:

> Chögyam Trungpa is a completely marvellous person. Young, natural, without front or artifice, deep, awake, wise. I am sure we will be seeing a lot more of each other. . . . I've had the idea of editing a collection of pieces by various Buddhists on meditation etc., with an introduction of my own. . . . I must talk to Chögyam Trungpa about this today.[15]

In 1977, I was privy to a discussion between Rinpoche and a Catholic priest that took place, oddly enough, at a Japanese teppan restaurant, where you sit around a central grill while the chef stir-fries your meal and then presents it to you. Since one of these grilling "islands" holds eight to ten people, you often sit with other diners who are not in your party. This particular evening, Rinpoche was with three or four companions. After we sat down, we were joined by two other diners, a Catholic priest and a relative of his. Rinpoche was seated right next to the priest. When he noticed that the gentleman next to him was a Catholic cleric,

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14. From an address to the Naropa Institute Conference on Christian and Buddhist Meditation, August 9, 1983, as quoted in *Speaking in Silence,* edited by Susan Szpakowski.

15. From entries dated October 20 and 22, 1968, in the *Asian Journal* as quoted in *Speaking in Silence,* edited by Susan Szpakowski.

he couldn't resist telling him stories about meeting Thomas Merton in India and about studying with Jesuits at Oxford. He wanted to know how the priest felt about Latin being dropped from the Catholic Mass (Rinpoche didn't approve), and the two of them ended up talking about the meaning of the Holy Ghost, which Rinpoche thought represented the true mystical aspect of Catholicism, which he feared was being lost. The enthusiasm that he showed that evening is similar to the quality that comes across in "Comparing the Heart," the discussion with Father Keating. Rinpoche must have been delighted to host an interfaith dialogue at Naropa about contemplative practice. It shows in these five articles. The editing captures the atmosphere of the talks, notably in "Natural Dharma," where thunderclaps and lightning help to make Rinpoche's points for him.

The next piece, "Farming," was originally published by Shambhala Publications in *Maitreya Three: Gardening.* Each of the six volumes in the *Maitreya* series, which were published over a number of years, took a theme and brought together articles related to the topic. Chögyam Trungpa's exposition of spiritual farming is quite a departure, but a delightful one, from his usual discussion of meditation and the Buddhist path. It turns out that spiritual farming is all about the *Heart Sutra.*[16]

"Work: Seeing Ordinary Things with Extraordinary Insight" talks about common attitudes encountered in working in the world and also addresses down-to-earth and juicy subjects such as relating to money. Another topical piece, "Sex," is included here, reprinted from the *Shambhala Sun.* This article is based on a lecture given in 1970 as part of a seminar titled "Work, Sex, and Money," from which both of these articles were drawn. In introducing the topic of sex, Trungpa Rinpoche says, "It's not so much a question of sex. It's more a question of love." This article about love, passion, and communication is provocative, heartfelt, and also very practical.

The last four offerings in Volume Two—"Hearty Discipline," "Transpersonal Cooperation at Naropa," "Sparks," and "Education for an Enlightened Society"—are about the philosophy and practice of education at

16. Trungpa Rinpoche contributed to two other issues of *Maitreya.* "Relationship" from *Maitreya IV* was included in *The Heart of the Buddha,* found in Volume Three of *The Collected Works.* "Femininity," his contribution to *Maitreya V: Woman,* appears in Volume Six.

Naropa Institute, but more broadly they are about how we learn and how we teach in an environment of sanity and cooperation. Education was a topic that Trungpa Rinpoche felt passionately about—after all, his entire life was dedicated to teaching, which he also saw as a tremendous opportunity to learn. So it seems fitting that this volume, concerned with so many aspects of training oneself and developing genuine self-knowledge, should end with a consideration of the discipline of higher education.

Naropa Institute opened its doors in the summer of 1974, only one year after the idea of the institute was first discussed. It was not a very long period of planning preceding the start-up of a university! According to John Baker and Marvin Casper, the editors of *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* and *The Myth of Freedom*, they presented "their idea for a college founded on the Buddhist principles of wisdom, compassion and enlightened action"[17] to Chögyam Trungpa in a meeting one afternoon in the summer of 1973. Like so many other important institutions and organizations that grew up around him, the initial idea arose in the minds of Rinpoche's students, or so they remember, in much the same way that some of the great sutras, or teachings by the Buddha, are actually recorded as discourses given by one of the Buddha's disciples, inspired into wisdom in his presence. As John Baker put it, "Marvin and I had this idea because we were inspired by and devoted to Trungpa Rinpoche . . . and he always set the context by teaching us."[18] Rinpoche, in any case, was delighted by the prospect of starting a Buddhist-inspired university in North America, and told Baker and Casper, "I'm pulling the trigger on the Naropa Institute."[19]

Initially, Trungpa Rinpoche wanted to call the institution Nalanda University, based on the name of the greatest institution of higher learning in India in the twelfth century. Some of Rinpoche's students suggested that it would be presumptuous to use the name Nalanda—it would be a lot to live up to and might bring derisive comments from some Buddhist scholars. Rinpoche reconsidered, choosing instead the name of the great Kagyü lineage holder Naropa, who was the abbot of

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17. Stephen Foehr, "Where East Meets West and Sparks Fly," *Shambhala Sun*, vol. 8, no. 3 (January 2000), p. 44.

18. Ibid., p. 46.

19. Ibid., p. 44.

Nalanda before he left to become a wandering mendicant, searching for his guru Tilopa and thus pursuing his spiritual quest.[20]

Chögyam Trungpa frequently talked about the educational model at Naropa as one that sought to bring together intellect and intuition. This point was the cornerstone of his remarks at the inaugural convocation of Naropa in the summer of 1974.[21] In this context, it was singularly appropriate to name the institute after the yogi Naropa, because Naropa's search for his teacher was sparked by his desire to join his vast intellectual knowledge of the teachings with genuine intuitive insight and wisdom, which he realized he sorely lacked. More about the life and teachings of Naropa can be found in Volume Five of *The Collected Works*.[22]

When Rinpoche and his students were making plans to begin the Institute, they anticipated that Naropa might have enough going for it to draw several hundred students to the first summer session in 1974. Rinpoche's first book based on teachings given in America, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism,* had been published in the fall of 1973 and was already proving to be a best-seller, having gone into its second printing almost the day it was published.[23] The organizers of Naropa planned to invite Alan Watts to teach during the first summer; John Baker delivered the invitation and Watts said that he would come. Unfortunately, he died suddenly and tragically of a heart attack in the winter of 1973.[24] Ram Dass also accepted an invitation to teach, which was sure to attract a large number of students, since his book *Be Here Now* was a great counterculture hit of that time. So a few hundred students would surely come to Naropa.

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20. For additional material on the founding and philosophy of Naropa Institute, see Fabrice Midal, *Trungpa* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2002), pp. 233–39. In general, this is an excellent book on the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa and their significance in relationship to events in his life and the development of his community in the West. This book is currently available only in French but is forthcoming in English translation from Shambhala Publications.

21. See "Basic Training, Part Two: The Followers of Naropa," from the video series *Thus I Have Heard,* published by Kalapa Recordings and Vajradhatu Publications, 2001.

22. See both the introduction and *Illusion's Game: The Life and Teaching of Naropa.*

23. Thirty years later, it remains one of Chögyam Trungpa's best-selling titles.

24. See John Baker's remarks in the introduction to Volume Three.

Imagine the surprise when almost two thousand students enrolled for the summer program. It was a mad dash to find enough teachers, venues for talks with audiences of a thousand or more, and housing for all the unexpected pupils. The summer proved to be chaotic, to be sure, but Naropa was also a huge success. During the summer of 1974, the institute offered courses on many facets and schools of Buddhism, as well as other Eastern religions, with Chögyam Trungpa and Ram Dass the biggest draws. Trungpa Rinpoche taught three courses: one on the practice and understanding of meditation, a second on the stages of the Tibetan Buddhist path, and a third presenting the tenets and practice of tantra—which was later edited into *Journey without Goal*.[25] The environment at his evening classes was more like a "happening" than a university course. A thousand or more people in every imaginable style of dress and hairdo, with hippie overtones predominating, gathered before his talks, some following the prescription to sit and meditate before the talk, but many simply "hanging out," waiting for him to arrive. In the early days, the Buddhist community that grew up around Rinpoche was often referred to as "the Scene," and a scene indeed it was.

Nevertheless, while few students may have recognized it, Chögyam Trungpa was quite serious about both practice and study at Naropa. His talks, while entertaining on the surface, were extraordinary expositions of the Buddhist path, and he saw to it that there was a meditation hall made available to all students on a daily basis—whether they used it regularly or not. From the beginning, he was not just starting a summer institute as a lark; he was establishing an institution of higher learner. While many of his students thought of Naropa in terms of a one-shot deal or at best in terms of planning for the next months or a year ahead, he saw the institute in terms of centuries to come.

Other Buddhist teachers who were to play a major role in the development of Buddhism in America were also at Naropa in 1974. For example, Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein were there, but at the time they were not well known. Beginning in 1974, Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, William Burroughs, Gregory Corso, and many other important writers were in residence. By the second summer of Naropa, they had coalesced their activity into what they called the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. Many other artists began teaching at Naropa from

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25. See Volume Four.

its infancy. Theater, dance, and music were all well represented.[26] Courses in Buddhist and Western psychology were offered, as mentioned by Judith Lief in her remarks quoted earlier. Gregory Bateson, the eminent anthropologist, taught there in the early days. However, although many exciting courses were given, as the first director of Naropa Institute, Martin Janowitz, commented, "There were no programs, let alone degree-granting programs. There were simply offerings."[27]

From its explosive beginning, Naropa has not really looked back. While it may lack some of the wild excitement and celebrity draw of its early days, it has gone on to become a respected year-round institution of higher learning, offering a unique educational approach. The institute became a fully accredited degree-granting institution in 1985. Now called Naropa University, it offers the Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education, Environmental Studies, InterArts Studies (concentrations in Dance/Movement Studies, Music, and Theater), Interdisciplinary Studies, Contemplative Psychology, Religious Studies, Traditional Eastern Arts, Visual Arts, and Writing and Literature. Graduate degrees are offered in Theater, Contemplative Education, Gerontology, several aspects of contemplative and transpersonal psychology and counseling, and religious studies and divinity, as well as several fields of Buddhist studies. Its growth and continuity are a testament to the man who founded it in an era of protest against tradition and helped to take it from its counterculture roots to an established institution that may well survive centuries into the future.

For understanding the uniqueness of Naropa and the roots of its educational philosophy of contemplative education, Chögyam Trungpa's four talks on education in Volume Two are particularly helpful and germane. In his talk at the first convocation, in addition to emphasizing the importance of combining intellect and intuition, Trungpa Rinpoche talked about the role of genuine discipline and appreciation for tradition at Naropa. In "Hearty Discipline," he talks about distinguishing between a religious approach to education, which he says is not the goal of Naropa, and "bringing the inheritance of Buddhist methodology into our system of education." By this, he explains, he means following the example of Nalanda University, Vikramashila, and other Buddhist centers of learning, where "the student, the practitioner, and the scholar concen-

26. See Volume Seven for more discussion of the arts at Naropa.

27. Personal communication from Martin Janowitz to Carolyn Rose Gimian, 2002.

trated one-pointedly, on the point. Education was a complete lifestyle." He talks about developing a critical intelligence that is applied both to the subject matter you are studying and to yourself, the person who is being educated. In this model, education is not purely aimed at the intellect but is an education of the whole person, which promotes overall wakefulness and sanity.

In this regard, it is interesting to note that Naropa was, from its earliest days, never shy about mixing contemplative practice with academic study, a somewhat unusual emphasis for an educational institution. At Naropa, while many other spiritual approaches are welcomed, the foundation has always been the sitting practice of meditation, taken from the Buddhist tradition but offered in the most neutral and nonsectarian way: as a means of training the mind and a vehicle for joining one's intellect and intuition into a unified experience. In his classes, Trungpa Rinpoche encouraged students to attend meditation sessions and requested that people sit and meditate while waiting for the talk to begin. In "Transpersonal Cooperation at Naropa," he talked about the importance of "the insight derived from the Buddhist outlook and meditative approach," which he said "provides the atmosphere of sanity which is beyond dogma, rather than establishing yet another dogma." He also speaks in this article about the importance of meditation in overcoming ego and establishing a ground of nonaggression that makes genuine appreciation of other traditions possible. This, he says, is the meaning of "transpersonal cooperation," which gives the article its name.

Naropa was such a happening phenomenon in 1974 that Anchor Books contracted with Rick Fields to edit a book based on the course offerings that summer. The result was *Loka: A Journal from Naropa Institute*, which was followed by *Loka 2*, which covered events of the summer of 1975. The contributions to the first *Loka* included "Tea and Tantra" by Milly Johnstone; "A Conversation with Gregory Bateson" by Rick Fields and Richard Greene; "How to Draw the Buddha" by L. Gyatso; "Tantra and Contemporary Man" by Herbert V. Guenther; "The First Six Days of the Bardo of Dharmata" by Francesca Fremantle; "Sadhana and Society" by Ram Dass; and poetry by Chögyam Trungpa and Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, Diane di Prima, John Giorno, Rick Fields, Lewis MacAdams, and many others. Also published in *Loka* was the article "Sparks," which appears in this volume of *The Collected Works*. It is a panel discussion with Trungpa Rinpoche, Ram Dass, Marvin Casper, and

moderator Duncan Campbell. The discussion centers on what makes for true cross-cultural appreciation and whether Naropa is genuinely open to other traditions or purely trying to convert others to its unspoken Buddhist philosophy. Rinpoche describes the experience at Naropa as being more like fireworks than adding a spoonful of sugar to your lemonade to pacify your experience and smooth over the differences. He says that there is room for "enormous individualism, in terms of the doctrines and teachings that are presented. All of them are valid but at the same time there is a meeting point which takes place in a spark." The discussion turns to what it really means to cut through traditional boundaries and expectations. In this context, Trungpa Rinpoche points out "how sparked this place [Naropa] is in everybody's mind" and goes on to say that the point is "that we honor people's experiences and their intellect so that they can conduct their own warfare within themselves while being sharp scholars in language studies or T'ai Chi, or whatever." He ends the discussion by saying that, after tradition is seen through and its limiting qualities transcended, it can reemerge as an experience of sacredness and sacred space, such as one finds in a temple or a zendo.

In "Education for an Enlightened Society," a talk given at Naropa in 1978, Rinpoche moves from energy that sparks to "energy sparkling." He is speaking here of how education can "bring about the enlightenment of the whole world." He clarifies that he is not speaking about a Utopian world but rather that his audience is the potential enlightened society. "You are the enlightened society, every one of you." He ties enlightened society into the enlightened state of mind that is latent or embryonic within all human beings and then goes on to talk about how education can bring out and nurture that wakefulness. He speaks about the meeting of minds between a teacher and a student in any educational relationship and about the three aspects or levels of learning traditionally described in the Buddhist teachings. The first stage is listening and collecting information, or studying the teachings; the second stage is contemplating what one has studied; the third stage is meditating, which incorporates "an unconditional meditative state," or being "*alert* on the spot," into one's learning process.

One of the things that made Chögyam Trungpa such a great teacher was that he was such a dedicated student—both in his formal studies in Tibet and at Oxford and also more generally throughout his life. He was truly a student of life, interested in if not fascinated by whatever he en-

countered. In the four articles on education that complete the offerings in Volume Two, we see his passion for learning as well as a deep appreciation for tradition. At a time when so many young people in America were rebelling against the forms of their society, Trungpa Rinpoche was offering them a way to make a genuine and lasting commitment to tradition and to participate in society without feeling imprisoned by it. In a way that was so characteristic of how he taught altogether, he saw their rebellion not as acting out *against* something but as a real thirst *for* something. Naropa University is, among many things, a tribute to his unshakable belief in the goodness and sanity of human beings and the great things that can come from a small, seemingly random spark of intelligence.

Taken as a whole, Volume Two demonstrates that the simplicity of meditation also encompasses the myriad facets of mind and leads us to a more open path, the mahayana, which values working with others as much as working on oneself. The subtleties of mind and meditation are many. This volume shows us Chögyam Trungpa's unique ability to present a many-faceted view of these topics. It also expresses how seamlessly he was able to join together spiritual development with work in the world.

CAROLYN ROSE GIMIAN
April 16, 2002
Trident Mountain House
Tatamagouche Mountain, Nova Scotia

The Path Is the Goal

A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation

Edited by Sherab Chödzin Kohn



Editor's Foreword

THIS BOOK COMPRISES two seminars given by the great Tibetan guru, the Vidyadhara, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, both dating from 1974. The first was given in March in New York, the second in September at Tail of the Tiger, a meditation center the Vidyadhara founded in Vermont, which was later renamed Karmê-Chöling. These seminars contain hitherto unpublished teachings of his on the view and practice of Buddhist meditation.

Traditional accounts tell us that at the time of the Buddha Shakyamuni's enlightenment, he saw a vast panorama of beings throughout the six realms of existence, suffering in their ignorance through an endless round of attachment and disappointment, birth and death. In the literature of the Buddhist tradition we find other accounts of such visions of human suffering. A recent account concerns the Gyalwa Karmapa, Rikpe Dorje (1924–1982), who was the sixteenth incarnation in a line of enlightened hierarchs, heads of the Kagyü order of Buddhism in Tibet. It recounts an incident in his first journey, in the mid-seventies, out of the medieval Himalayan world he had known into the modern West. His first stop was Hong Kong, where his hosts took him to the top of a skyscraper. Standing on the observation platform, the Karmapa looked out with astonishment and delight at the vast view of the city below. Then, after a moment or two, he began to cry. He had to be helped inside by his attendants with tears pouring from his eyes. Later he explained that at the sight of the huge city with its teeming masses being born and struggling and dying without a shred of dharma to help them—"without," as he said, "so much as an OM MANI PADME HUM"—he had been overcome by grief.

From these visions, we do not have to come far to arrive at the job description confronting Trungpa Rinpoche in America. The Vidyadhara was himself the eleventh incarnation in a line of enlightened spiritual and temporal rulers from eastern Tibet. When he arrived in North America as the sole representative of his lineage in 1970, he saw an exciting and vigorous culture, very full of itself, covering a vast continent. He saw at the same time myriads of individual people suffering through ignorance, through entrenched views about life and lots of aggressive speed. As he himself later described the situation, "Even with . . . encouragement, from the present lineage fathers and my devoted students, I have been left out in the cold as full-time garbageman, janitor, diaper service, and babysitter. So finally I alone have ended up as captain of this great vessel. I alone have to liberate its millions of passengers in this dark age. I alone have to sail this degraded samsaric ocean, which is very turbulent. With the blessings of the lineage, and because of my unyielding vow, there is obviously no choice."* In 1970 the eleventh Trungpa Tülku was scarcely thirty. He had been trained intensively in intellectual and meditative disciplines from early childhood, and was regarded by Tibetans as a meditation master of extraordinarily high accomplishment, in full possession of his heritage of awakened mind. Only a few short years in England separated him from the rarefied, protected life of a Tibetan dharma prince. Now he was a penniless immigrant in America. Where to begin?

"The sitting practice of meditation," the Vidyadhara told his listeners, "is the only way." Brilliantly expounding the buddhadharma, he persuaded, cajoled, pleaded, commanded. He rapped the local lingo. He created suitable situations. He did everything he possibly could to get people to apply their bottoms to meditation cushions—except promise results. Only the practice of sitting meditation, as taught by the Buddha himself, could lay the groundwork for an authentic understanding of the Buddha's teaching. If people could sit, and keep sitting, without looking for results, a gap could be created in ego's defenses, and unconditional awareness could begin to shine through.

But ego furiously opposes unconditional awareness. And its key strategy against meditation's assault, the Vidyadhara taught, is spiritual mate-

*Nālanda Translation Committee/Trungpa, *The Rain of Wisdom* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999), p. xii.

rialism. This is the attempt to make use of spiritual teachings for our own preconceived purposes. We would like to live longer, be healthier, stronger, more highly competent, more magnetic, more powerful, more highly admired, richer, and more and more invulnerable. What better vehicle toward these ends than profoundest ancient wisdom and techniques of mind training, honed by centuries of application? And if meditation can be tied to ambition, the heart of its power of liberation is gone.

From the beginning the Vidyadhara fought a pitched battle against spiritual materialism. He never tired of explaining in different ways that the true spiritual journey is that of surrender, the gradual abandonment of the reference point of ego through an ever-clearer vision of things as they are. That is why he stunned his audiences over and over by describing, as he does here also, a lonely journey, marked by the painful disappointment of ego's dreams as much as by the joy and freshness of open mind. From the beginning he asked his students to undertake the full rigors of the path as it really is, rather than pitching to their spiritually materialistic appetites. But once they had begun to surrender the reference point of ego, he encouraged, supported, and nurtured their work on themselves in whatever way he could.

The teachings given here on basic meditation—shamatha and vipashyana, mindfulness and awareness—provide the foundation that every practitioner needs to awaken as the Buddha did. In addition it was in connection with these basic teachings that the Vidyadhara formulated the overall view of the path of buddhadharma for the first time for Westerners.

I can only hope that readers of this book will be caught by Trungpa Rinpoche's iron hook of compassion. Let us apply ourselves genuinely to the path of meditation.

SHERAB CHÖDZIN KOHN
Nova Scotia, 1994



Part One

NEW YORK
MARCH 1974

ONE

The Only Way

THE IDEA OF THIS particular seminar is to establish a fundamental understanding of the Buddhist approach toward the practice of meditation. Some of you are experienced, some of you are new. In any case, I would like to reteach the whole thing. It is very important to develop a basic understanding of meditation, and it is extremely important for you to understand the fundamentals of the Buddhist way of thinking about meditation. This is extremely important for the work that I am doing, and we are doing, to establish a firm ground of Buddhism in this country. A firm ground would mean people having no misunderstanding whatsoever concerning basic meditation practice and the Buddhist attitude toward enlightenment.

A tradition that developed in Tibet, my country, and other Buddhist countries in medieval times is understanding Buddhism in terms of a three-yana process. You begin with the hinayana discipline, then you open yourself to the mahayana level, and then finally you evolve into the vajrayana discipline. So the work we are doing is part of this three-yana approach. I want you to understand the main aspects of this very basic and fundamental process before beginning on the path.

Those who have already begun to tread the path need to reexamine their journey. It is highly important to begin at the beginning rather than starting halfway through without the beginning. That would be like building your castle on an ice block or setting up your apartment in an airplane.

The topic we will be dealing with in this seminar is mindfulness and

awareness, which is the basic heart of the Buddhist approach. According to the Buddha, no one can attain basic sanity and basic enlightenment without practicing meditation. You might be highly confused or you might be highly awakened and completely ready for the path. You might be emotionally disturbed and experiencing a sense of claustrophobia in relation to your world. Perhaps you are inspired by works of art you have done or the visual and audial aspects of works of art in general. You might be fat, thin, big, small, intelligent, stupid—whatever you are, there is only one way, unconditionally, and that is to begin with the practice of meditation. The practice of meditation is *the* and *only* way. Without that, there is no way out and no way in.

The practice of meditation is a way of unmasking ourselves, our deceptions of all kinds, and also the practice of meditation is a way of bringing out the subtleties of intelligence that exist within us. The experience of meditation sometimes plays the role of playmate; sometimes it plays the role of devil's advocate, fundamental depression. Sometimes it acts as an encouragement for birth, sometimes as an encouragement for death. Its moods might be entirely different in different levels and states of being and emotion, as well as in the experience of different individuals—but fundamentally, according to the Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, there is no doubt, none whatsoever, that meditation is the only way for us to begin on the spiritual path. That is the only way. *The* way.

Meditation is a way of realizing the fundamental truth, the basic truth, that we can discover ourselves, we can work on ourselves. The goal is the path and the path is the goal. There is no other way of attaining basic sanity than the practice of meditation. Absolutely none. The evidence for that is that for two thousand five hundred years since the time of the Buddha, down through the lineage of enlightened teachers from generation to generation, people have gained liberation through the practice of meditation. This is not a myth. It's reality. It actually did exist, it does exist; it did work, it did happen, it does work, it does happen. But without the practice of meditation, there is no way.

Let us discuss the term *meditation* at this point. When we talk about the practice of meditation, we are talking about a way of being. Unfortunately, the term *meditation* is not quite an adequate translation of the Sanskrit term *dhyana* or *samadhi*. Whenever we use a verbal form like "to meditate" or "meditating," that automatically invites the question "What are you meditating upon?" or "What are you meditating in?"

That is a common question that always comes up. But according to the Buddha's philosophy, there is no verb "to meditate." There is just a noun, "meditation." There's no meditat*ing*. You don't meditate, but you be in a state of meditation. You might find it very hard to swallow this distinction. We have a linguistic, a grammatical problem here. Meditating is not part of the Buddhist vocabulary, but meditation is.

"Meditation" is a noun that denotes that you are being in a state of meditation *already*. Whereas "meditat*ing*" gives the idea of an activity that's taking place all the time, that you're meditating on this or that, concentrating on flickering candlelight, watching an incense stick burning, listening to your pulse, your heartbeat, listening to the inner tunes of your mantric utterance going on in your head—whatever. But according to the buddhadharma, meditation is a simple factor. You don't meditate, you just be in the meditation. *Dhyana* is a noun rather than a verb. It refers to being in a state of dhyana, rather than "dhyana-ing." Meditation in this case has no object, no purpose, no reference point. It is simply individuals willing to take a discipline on themselves, not to please God or the Buddha or their teacher or themselves. Rather one just sits, one holds oneself together. One sits a certain length of time. One just simply sits without aim, object, purpose, without anything at all. Nothing whatsoever. One just *sits*.

You might ask, "Then what does one do if one sits? Shouldn't one be doing something? Or is one just sitting there hanging out?" Well, there's a difference between sitting and "hanging out" in the American idiom. The term *hanging out* means something like "grooving on your scene." And sitting is just being there like a piece of rock or a disused coffee cup sitting on the table. So meditation is not regarded as hanging out but just sitting and being, simply.

Questions often come up like, "Why the hell am I doing this, behaving like an idiot, just sitting?" And people also experience a lot of resentment. They think, "I've been told to sit like this. Somebody's making fun of me, taking advantage of my gullibility. Somebody has made me just sit like that, just sit. I'm not even allowed to hang out. I have to just sit on my meditation cushion." But the instruction to do that is actually an extremely important, powerful message. If we learn to sit properly, thoroughly, and fully, that is the best thing we could do at this point.

If we look back on the history of our life since we were born, since we first went to school, we never sat. We never sat. We might have

hung out occasionally and experienced utter boredom and felt sorry for ourselves. Feeling bored and preoccupied, we might have hung out occasionally on street corners or in our living rooms watching television, chewing our chewing gum, and so forth. But we never sat. We never sat like a rock. We never did. How about that?

Here, this is the first experience in our life of sitting—not hanging out or perching—but actually sitting on the ground on a meditation cushion. Just that to begin with, to say nothing for the moment about techniques for how you sit. Before we discuss techniques, let us point out the merit—*punya* in Sanskrit—the very merit and sanity and wakefulness you are going to get out of this, out of just simply being willing to sit like a piece of rock. It's fantastically powerful. It overrides the atom bomb. It's extraordinarily powerful that we decide just to sit, not hang out or perch, but just sit on a meditation cushion. Such a brave attitude, such a wonderful commitment is magnificent. It is very sane, extraordinarily sane.

We usually don't sit on the ground. We sit on chairs. The closest we get to just sitting is when we sit still for ten or twenty hours as passengers or drivers in our cars. But then we are entertained by the road, by the traveling, by the speed. We think we are sitting, but still we are getting somewhere. We are still traveling. Apart from that, we have never known actually sitting on the ground properly and thoroughly and fully like a rock, like a sitting buddha. We have never done that. That is an extraordinary experience. This is an important point. This is what we actually miss in this world. When we sit, it is always for a purpose. If we are sitting in a car, we are thinking, "How long is it going to take me to get to my destination, so I can begin to rush?" We count mileage, note the speed of our car, watch the speedometer. We sit for a purpose. It is a very interesting point that nobody has experienced that we can actually sit on a cushion without any purpose, none whatsoever. It is outrageous. Nobody would actually ever do that. We can't even think about it. It's unthinkable. It's terrible—we would be wasting our time.

Now there's the point—wasting our time. Maybe that's a good one, wasting our time. Give time a rest. Let it be wasted. Create virgin time, uncontaminated time, time that hasn't been hassled by aggression, passion, and speed. Let us create pure time. Sit and create pure time.

That is a very important thing. It might sound crazy to you, impracti-

cal, but it is very important to think in those terms. Sitting practice is a revolutionary idea for Westerners, but not as far as Buddhists are concerned. Buddha did it. Buddha did it two thousand five hundred years ago. He sat and wasted his time. And he transmitted the knowledge to us that it is the best thing we can do for ourselves—waste our time by sitting. The very idea of aggression and passion could be tamed by sitting practice. Just sitting like a piece of rock is a very important point.

We can discuss the techniques later, but right now I don't want to overcrowd your mind. I want you to think about the importance of wasting time sitting, slowing down, becoming like a piece of rock. It's the first message of the Buddha.

My particular lineage is the Kagyü lineage. *Kagyü* means "follower of the sacred word." And this lineage is also known as the *drubgyü*, "the practicing lineage." We have been known for this emphasis on practice. We understand that the emphasis on practice is very important. And my lineage has produced millions of sane people in the past. And is doing so in the present as well. We have evidence of that.

Sitting practice is the basic point, before we embark on any spiritual disciplines at all, especially in Buddhism. The teachings of Buddha are presented in a threefold way, as we mentioned. And on the hinayana level alone, we have shila, samadhi, and prajna—discipline, meditation, and intellect. And before we begin with shila—discipline—of any kind, we have to learn to slow down. That is the basic discipline of how to be. So the basic way to learn to behave in a buddhalike way is sitting practice. Then, after that, we develop meditation (samadhi) and knowledge (prajna). Before we learn to spell words, we have to learn our ABCs. We have to be actually willing to accept the boredom of sitting, willing to relate with that particular sanity, which is unconditional sanity. This sanity has nothing to do with fighting against insanity or trying to exorcise it. It is just fundamentally, basically, trying to be simple as what we are. That is the basic point according to Buddha.

Student: Rinpoche, could you say something about merit?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Merit is a sense of richness and a sense of reward, which can only develop by not creating further complications in our confusion. Just sitting and doing nothing is the best way of all to produce merit.

Student: Could you say something about the difference between the complexity, the complicated structure, of neurosis and what maybe could be called the simple richness of sanity?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Complexity is also very simple. It is so complex it becomes simple. I don't see any problems with that, particularly. You look up at the sky and see the stars, thousands of millions of them. They seem to be very complicated. It's difficult to name them, find out what they are, and so on. But still, it's the simple sky. The complexity and the simplicity amount to the same thing. Confusion and complexity are the expression of simplicity.

Student: Discipline in sitting practice seems very comforting to me. It tells me what to do. Then I get up from my sitting practice and I light a cigarette. I would like a rule of discipline that tells me I should not light the cigarette as I'm told I should sit. I'm always in confusion about where rules are given or where a suggestion for discipline is given and where they're withheld or not presented.

Trungpa Rinpoche: These rules and regulations are not homemade recipes. The rules and regulations that have developed in the Buddhist tradition are extremely official and efficient and very powerful. Those rules and regulations are no longer a domestic matter connected with your comfort. The rules and regulations are fundamental openness. If you feel there's something wrong about lighting a cigarette, don't regard it as your problem. Or for that matter, don't regard having sexual fantasies in the middle of your sitting practice or having aggression fantasies—how you're going to punch your enemy in the nose—as your problems. All kinds of things like that happen, but they are no longer regarded as problems. They are regarded as a promise, in fact. Those are the only working basis that we have. Those are the only working basis that we have in our practice of meditation. Without those, we are completely sterile, cleaned out with Ajax, like hospital corridors where there's no place for germs. The path of dharma, the dharma marga, provides all kinds of problems, obstacles, and we work along with those. Without that path, we would fall asleep. Suppose highways were without any bends, just like Roman roads, a one-shot deal straight from New York to Washington, 100 percent straight. The drivers would fall asleep. Because of that, there would be more accidents than if the road had bends in it with road signs here and there. The path is personal experience, and one should

take delight in those little things that go on in our lives, the obstacles, seductions, paranoias, depressions, and openness. All kinds of things happen, and that is the content of the journey, which is extremely powerful and important. Without those problems, we cannot tread on the path. We should feel grateful that we are in the samsaric world, so that we can tread the path, that we are not sterile, completely cleaned out, that the world has not been taken over by some computerized system. There's still room for rawness and ruggedness and roughness all over the place. Good luck!

TWO

Continuing Your Confusion

HAVING LAID THE basic groundwork regarding the practice of meditation, we can now go further and discuss the point that the practice of meditation involves a basic sense of continuity. The practice of meditation does not involve discontinuing one's relationship with oneself and looking for a better person or searching for possibilities of reforming oneself and becoming a better person. The practice of meditation is a way of continuing one's confusion, chaos, aggression, and passion—but working with it, seeing it from the enlightened point of view. That is the basic purpose of meditation practice as far as this approach is concerned.

There is a Sanskrit term for basic meditation practice, *shamatha,* which means "development of peace." In this case, peace refers to the harmony connected with accuracy rather than to peace from the point of view of pleasure rather than pain. We have experienced pain, discomfort, because we have failed to relate with the harmony of things as they are. We haven't seen things as they are precisely, directly, properly, and because of that we have experienced pain, chaotic pain. But in this case when we talk about peace we mean that for the first time we are able to see ourselves completely, perfectly, beautifully *as what we are,* absolutely as what we are.

This is more than raising the level of our potentiality. If we talk in those terms, it means we are thinking of an embryonic situation that

will develop: this child may be highly disturbed, but he has enormous potentiality of becoming a reasonable, less disturbed personality. We have a problem with language here, an enormous problem. Our language is highly involved with the realm of possessions and achievements. Therefore, we have a problem in expressing with this language the notion of unconditional potentiality, which is the notion that is applicable here.

Shamatha meditation practice is the vanguard practice for developing our mindfulness. I would like to call your attention to this term, *mindfulness*. Generally, when we talk about mindfulness, it has to do with a warning sign, like the label on your cigarette package where the surgeon general tells you this is dangerous to your health—beware of this, be mindful of this. But here mindfulness is not connected with a warning. In fact, it is regarded as more of a welcoming gesture: you could be fully minded, mindful. Mindfulness means that you could be a wholesome person, a completely wholesome person, rather than that you should not be doing this or that. Mindfulness here does not mean that you should look this way or that way so you can be cured of your infamous problems, whatever they are, your problems of being mindless. Maybe you think like this: you are a highly distracted person, you have problems with your attention span. You can't sit still for five minutes or even one minute, and you should control yourself. Everybody who practices meditation begins as a naughty boy or naughty girl who has to learn to control himself or herself. They should learn to pay attention to their desk, their notebook, their teacher's blackboard.

That is the attitude that is usually connected with the idea of mindfulness. But the approach here has nothing to do with going back to school, and mindfulness has nothing to do with your attention span as you experienced it in school at all. This is an entirely new angle, a new approach, a development of peace, harmony, openness.

The practice of meditation, in the form of shamatha at the beginner's level, is simply being. It is bare attention that has nothing to do with a warning. It is just simply being and keeping a watchful eye, completely and properly. There are traditional disciplines, techniques, for that, mindfulness techniques. But it is very difficult actually to explain the nature of mindfulness. When you begin trying to develop mindfulness in the ordinary sense, a novice sense, your first flash of thought is that you are unable to do such a thing. You feel that you may not be able to

accomplish what you want to do. You feel threatened. At the same time, you feel very romantic: "I am getting into this new discipline, which is a unique and very powerful thing for me to do. I feel joyous, contemplative, monkish (or 'nunkish'). I feel a sense of renunciation, which is very romantic."

Then the actual practice begins. The instructors tell you how to handle your mind and your body and your awareness and so on. In practicing shamatha under those circumstances, you feel like a heavily loaded pack donkey trying to struggle across a highly polished stream of ice. You can't grip it with your hooves, and you have a heavy load on your back. At the same time, people are hitting you from behind, and you feel so inadequate and so embarrassed. Every beginning meditator feels like an adolescent donkey, heavily loaded and not knowing how to deal with the slippery ice. Even when you are introduced to various mindfulness techniques that are supposed to help you, you still feel the same thing—that you are dealing with a foreign element, which you are unable to deal with properly. But you feel that you should at least show your faith and bravery, show that you are willing to go through the ordeal of the training, the challenge of the discipline.

The problem here is not so much that you are uncertain how to practice meditation, but that you haven't identified the teachings as personal experience. The teachings are still regarded as a foreign element coming into your system. You feel you have to do your best with that sense of foreignness, which makes you a clumsy young donkey. The young donkey is being hassled by his master a great deal, and he is already used to carrying a heavy load and to being hit every time there is a hesitation. In that picture the master becomes an external entity rather than the donkey's own conviction. A lot of the problems that come up in the practice of meditation have to do with a fear of foreignness, a sense that you are unable to relate with the teachings as part of your basic being. That becomes an enormous problem.

The practice of shamatha meditation is one of the most basic practices for becoming a good Buddhist, a well-trained person. Without that, you cannot take even a step toward a personal understanding of the true buddhadharma. And the buddhadharma, at this point, is no myth. We know that this practice and technique was devised by the Buddha himself. We know that he went through the same experiential process. Therefore, we can follow his example.

The basic technique here is identification with one's breath or, when doing walking meditation, identification with one's walking. There is a traditional story that Buddha told an accomplished musician that he should relate to controlling his mind by keeping it not too tight and not too loose. He should keep his mind at the right level of attention. So, as we practice these techniques, we should put 25 percent of our attention on the breathing or the walking. The rest of our mental activities should be let loose, left open. This has nothing to do with the vajrayana or crazy wisdom or anything like that at all. It is just practical advice. When you tell somebody to keep a high level of concentration, to concentrate 100 percent and not make any mistakes, that person becomes stupid and is liable to make more mistakes because he's so concentrated on what he's doing. There's no gap. There's no room to open himself, no room to relate with the back-and-forth play between the reference point of the object and the reference point of the subject. So the Buddha quite wisely advised that you put only tentative attention on your technique, not to make a big deal out of concentrating on the technique (this method is mentioned in the *Samadhiraja Sutra*). Concentrating too heavily on the technique brings all kinds of mental activities, frustrations, and sexual and aggressive fantasies of all kinds. So you keep just on the verge of your technique, with just 25 percent of your attention. Another 25 percent is relaxing, a further 25 percent relates to making friends with oneself, and the last 25 percent connects with expectation—your mind is open to the possibility of something happening during this practice session. The whole thing is synchronized completely.

These four aspects of mindfulness have been referred to in the *Samadhiraja Sutra* as the four wheels of a chariot. If you have only three wheels, there's going to be a strain on the chariot as well as the horse. If you have two, the chariot will be heavy to the point of not being functional—the horse will have to hold up the whole thing and pull as well. If, on the other hand, you have five or six wheels on your chariot, that will create a bumpy ride and the passengers will not feel all that comfortable. So the ideal number of wheels we should have on our chariot is four, the four techniques of meditation: concentration, openness, awareness, expectation. That leaves a lot of room for play. That is the approach of the buddhadharma, and we know that a lot of people in the lineage have practiced that way and have actually achieved a perfect state of enlightenment in one lifetime.

The reason why the technique is very simple is that, that way, we cannot elaborate on our spiritual-materialism trip.[1] Everyone breathes, unless they are dead. Everyone walks, unless they are in a wheelchair. And those techniques are the simplest and the most powerful, the most immediate, practical, and relevant to our life. In the case of breathing, there is a particular tradition that has developed from a commentary on the *Samadhiraja Sutra* written by Gampopa. There we find the notion, related to breathing, of mixing mind and space, which is also used in tantric meditative practices. But even at the hinayana level, there is a mixing of mind and space. This has become one of the very important techniques of meditation. Sometimes this particular approach is also referred to as *shi-lhak sung juk,* which is a Tibetan expression meaning "combining shamatha and vipashyana meditation practices."

Combining shamatha and vipashyana plays an important part in the meditator's development. Mindfulness becomes awareness. Mindfulness is taking an interest in precision of all kinds, in the simplicity of the breath, of walking, of the sensations of the body, of the experiences of the mind—of the thought process and memories of all kinds. Awareness is acknowledging the totality of the whole thing. In the Buddhist tradition, awareness has been described as the first experience of egolessness. The term for awareness in Tibetan is *lhakthong,*[2] and there is an expression *lhakthong dagme tokpe sherap,* which means "the knowledge that realizes egolessness through awareness." This is the first introduction to the understanding of egolessness. Awareness in this case is totality rather than one-sidedness. A person who has achieved awareness or who is working on the discipline of awareness has no direction, no bias in one direction or another. He is just simply aware, totally and completely. This awareness also includes precision, which is the main quality of awareness in the early stage of the practice of meditation.

Awareness brings egolessness because there is no object of awareness. You are aware of the whole thing completely, of you and other and of the activities of you and other at the same time. So everything is open. There is no particular object of the awareness.

If you're smart enough, you might ask the question, "Who is being aware of this whole thing?" That's a very interesting question, the sixty-four-dollar question. And the answer is, nobody is being aware of anything but *itself.* The razor blade cuts itself. The sun shines by itself. Fire

burns by itself. Water flows by itself. Nobody watches—and that is the very primitive logic of egolessness.

I'm sure the mahayanists would sneer and think that this is terrible logic, very crude. They probably would not hold high opinions of it. But from the point of view of hinayana, that's extraordinarily fantastic logic. Razor blade cuts itself; fire burns itself; water quenches thirst by itself.[3] This is the egolessness of vipashyana practice.

Traditionally, we have the term *smriti-upasthana* in Sanskrit, or *satipatthana* in Pali, which means resting in one's intelligence. This is the same as awareness. Awareness here does not mean that the person practicing vipashyana meditation gives up his or her shamatha techniques of, say, anapanasati—mindfulness of the coming and going of the breath—or of walking in walking meditation practice. The meditator simply relates with that discipline in a more expansive way. He or she begins to relate with the whole thing. This is done in connection with what is known as the four foundations of mindfulness: mindfulness of body, of mind, of livelihood, and of effort.[4]

If you relate with every move you make in your sitting practice of meditation, if you take note of every detail, every aspect of the movement of your mind, of the relationships in everything that you do, there's no room for anything else at all. Every area is taken over by meditation, by vipashyana practice. So there is no one to practice and nothing to practice. No you actually exists. Even if you think, "I am practicing this particular technique," you really have no one there to relate to, no one to talk to. Even at the moment when you say, "I am practicing," that too is an expression of awareness at the same time, so you have nothing left, nothing whatsoever, even no "I am practicing." You can still say the empty words, but they are like a lion's corpse, as it has been traditionally described. When the lion is dead, the lion's corpse remains lying in the jungle, and the other animals continue to be frightened of the lion. The only ones who can destroy the lion's corpse are the worms who crawl up from underneath and do not see it from the outside. They eat through it, so finally the lion's corpse disintegrates on the ground. So the worms are like the awareness, the knowledge that realizes egolessness through awareness—vipashyana.

Student: You characterized shamatha as mindfulness and vipashyana as awareness. Then you went on to speak of the combination of shamatha and vipashyana. How would you characterize that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's a combination of the two, of being precise and at the same time being open. Precision is shamatha and openness is vipashyana, and it is possible to have both of those happening together.

S: But don't they already happen together in vipashyana? Isn't the development of vipashyana based on the precision of shamatha, which vipashyana then goes on to include in its openness or awareness?

TR: That is precisely why we talk about shamatha-vipashyana. One of the interesting points is that even at the level of maha ati or the mahamudra experience—on the tantric level of awarenesss—shamatha and vipashyana still function. They are still valid, because you have developed this basic way of taming your mind, and it is still developing.

S: But if vipashyana includes or is based on shamatha, why do we have to bother to speak of shamatha-vipashyana?

TR: Further clarity and further precision develop. Shamatha comes back again at the level of the sixth bhumi of the bodhisattva path, when the bodhisattva has achieved the paramita of prajna. He still comes back to shamatha, and vipashyana comes back again as well. There is a second round.

S: Maybe it's that vipashyana is a stance of openness, and as such, maybe it's a little too loose.

TR: That's right. It loses its perspective, so there is a constant renewal of things happening. Then the same thing happens again on the tantric level of kriya yoga, which is the first of the six yanas of tantra, involved with purity. You begin your precision once more. Then it happens again at the level of the yanas of the higher tantra, mahayoga yana, the first of the ati yanas. There again, you bring back your precision of relating with certain mandalas and the experience of phenomena. So there's a constant recalling, again and again throughout the nine yanas. The precision of shamatha practice is always recalled, again and again.

Student: Rinpoche, could you clarify satipatthana a little bit?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Satipatthana, or smriti-upasthana, as it is known in Sanskrit, is the basic mindfulness practice that goes on in both shamatha and vipashyana. It is made up of the four foundations of mindfulness, *drenpa nyewar shakpa shi* in Tibetan, which means resting your cognitive mind, mindfulness. That is always a very important point. Without that, it is impossible to begin on the Buddhist path at all. It is the foundation of your building. Without going through that process, you have misun-

derstandings of vajrayana, misunderstandings of mahayana, and of course misunderstandings of hinayana. So satipatthana is the only way that is taught. It is a very important basic beginning. A person cannot begin any spiritual discipline without that, because his mind will not be tamed. Basic sanity will not be developed. No reconciliation, or acceptance, will have developed at the beginner's level.

S: It's not easy.

TR: It's very hard, very difficult. That's why we call the beginning level hinayana, the narrow path, which is very severe, extremely severe. It's not a matter of being happy and having fun, particularly. It's verrrry difficult.

S: It has to be conquered.

TR: Has to be reconciled, or rather, you have to become reconciled to it. That's why there are going to be very rare Buddhists who are actually going to involve themselves with such a process. They will be what is known as golden Buddhists, who have been burned and hammered and have finally turned into pure gold, beyond the twenty-four-carat level, very fine gold. This is very difficult, but it is better to have golden Buddhists than copper Buddhists.

Student: Rinpoche, in meditation practice, when you're beginning to develop vipashyana and you become aware of the space around the breath, is there is no longer a watcher involved?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There is still a watcher involved, but the watcher is no longer regarded as problematic. The watcher is regarded as a vehicle.

S: So should one encourage the watcher during meditation?

TR: One doesn't do anything with the watcher. One just lives with the watcher.

S: How is the watcher a vehicle?

TR: Well, we don't have anything else but the watcher for a vehicle. At that point, the only intelligent voice that you have is the watcher. For lack of a better choice, that's it. Sometimes the watcher is referred to as self-consciousness. In the Christian tradition, it might be referred to as a guilt conflict—whatever.

Student: If you put 25 percent concentration on the breath and 25 percent on relaxation, and so on—the way you described—does that create a problem with identifying with the breath as you have taught us to do?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Absolutely not. It provides more possibility of identifying. Take a very simple example. People find it very conducive when they're watching movies to eat popcorn. Twenty-five percent, maybe 50 percent of their attention is on the screen, and another 25 percent is on popcorn, and another 25 percent is on their companion or their Coca-Cola or whatever. Which makes the whole experience of going to the cinema very pleasurable. That's precisely the whole point. You develop enormous concentration. You follow the dialogue in the movie and you follow every detail of the story, and you have a good time at the movies.

Student: It seems to me that once you gave some instruction before we were going to meditate like, "Don't be the watcher."

Trungpa Rinpoche: You can't be the watcher anyway, but if you try to be the watcher, that just creates further problems. It's like leprosy: once you have one sore, that expands and develops another, and another sore is constantly developing. So the less watcher, the more clean-cut. But rather than trying to abandon the watcher, you just don't take part in the watcher's trip.

S: Is the watcher your reference point?

TR: Reference point *is* the watcher. The reference point referring to itself is the watcher. There is no other watcher other than the reference point. That's the whole point—that all kinds of reference points become the watcher.

Student: When I'm meditating I see words, and some of them seem to be other people's thoughts and some of them seem to be communications from somewhere else, and some of them seem to be directions. And it's very hard to really distinguish what's what.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Why bother?

S: Just to clarify.

TR: Why bother?

S: I suppose I can just try to ride through the confusion, but—

TR: There's no point trying to sort out whose confusion is whose. That would be like trying to sort out whose dollar is whose, and every nickel and every cent. The whole thing becomes very complicated. Maybe some analytical disciplines might encourage you to sort out the problem of the universe bit by bit, but we Buddhists are very sloppy, I'm afraid. We don't bother to count our pennies. We just deal with dollars,

or twenty-dollar checks, or seven-hundred-dollar checks. It's just simply money. It doesn't matter who each cent came from. That doesn't seem to present any problems.

S: I'm a writer. I try to record it.

TR: Well, you have to write very simply. The possibilities are you might become a more successful writer if you simplify the plot. Make it very clean-cut, which is very intriguing at the same time, maybe very mysterious. That makes a best-seller.

S: I don't know. I wouldn't really know how to simplify.

TR: Don't try to. That's the starting point.

Student: Making friends with yourself.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well said.

Student: Can you make a distinction between hope and expectation, which is one of the things that you listed for 25 percent attention? You once said it was necessary to give up hope, and I really don't see too much distinction there.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Hope is future-oriented. Expectation is much closer to reality, but still not quite getting to the reality. It's on the verge of reality. Hope is like saying, "I hope I could be the mother of a child." Expectation means you are already pregnant, that it is already happening in real life, that you are going to bear a child. Which is much more immediate.

Student: What is perfect enlightenment, which you mentioned in your talk?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The Sanskrit term is *samyaksambuddha,* which traditionally means enlightenment without any reference point. So there is no certainty whether you have actually attained enlightenment or not. You *are.* If you look at it from our angle, it might be very dull, disappointing. But once you are there, you find it is completely spacious. The whole thing doesn't sound that glamorous, eh?

Student: How do you avoid creating a better speedy, confused situation by doling out your awareness into concentration and expectation, et cetera? It seems to me that in meditation practice, just as in the rest

of your life, you try to keep on top of what you're doing and create space at the same time. And it only creates more confusion.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think the only thing to do is try not to sort out what is better and what is not better. Sorting out produces further problems. Gesundheit.

Student: Is there a point in meditation practice where you practice letting go of the watcher or reference point, or is it something that just falls away by itself?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There's no telling. No promise.

S: Is letting go of the reference point something you consciously practice?

TR: No promise. Duhkha, suffering, is regarded as the first noble truth. Discovering duhkha is also regarded as one of the noble truths. And the path is regarded as a noble truth and the goal is regarded as a noble truth. All the four noble truths are equally valid in themselves. One can't say which one is the best truth. All four are noble truths. Good luck!

S: I don't understand at all.

TR: Well, think about it. You can't sort out which is the best one.

S: The question I think I was asking was related to the practice itself: whether letting go is something active or something that just happens through the practice of watching the breath.

TR: Both are saying the same thing. Letting go is watching the breath, watching the breath is letting go. Saying the same thing.

Student: Could meditation and these techniques you've been talking about be regarded as a form of psychotherapy?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Psychotherapy is analyzing oneself and providing medication—being therapeutic. But meditation is not regarded as medicine or even as therapeutic. It is just an unconditional way of being in life.

S: Well, is it parallel at all to existential therapy in philosophy and practice?

TR: Somewhat, but the Buddhist approach is more boring. There's no glamour involved.

Student: I've been wondering what dangers one can encounter in meditation, if there are dangers that exist.

Trungpa Rinpoche: If one becomes involved in contemplative practices which entail contemplating all kinds of visual objects without first having developed basic shamatha and vipashyana, it could be quite dangerous. The scriptures say that if you become involved in visualizing without basic training of the mind, you could become Rudra, an egomaniac. Apart from that, if a person is following a very simple technique of meditation practice and has a background in the basic training, there's no problem at all. That is why shamatha, for example, is called development of peace. It is harmless, very kind. That's why vipashyana is called development of insight or awareness—because it sharpens your basic being. It is designed for those people who are following the first stages of the path.

According to the Buddhist tradition, there are five paths that make up the path: the path of accumulation, the path of unification, the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning. So in this case, being a beginner, you are starting on the path of accumulation. Traditionally, a person on the path of accumulation should begin with shamatha practice, which is a harmless practice, but at the same time very fruitful. That's how the Buddha designed the path. And it seems it has been working for twenty-five hundred years. Nobody has gone utterly crazy except those people who didn't follow his path.

Student: How do you reconcile what you said in your first talk about being willing to waste time and what you talked about tonight about 25 percent expectation? I mean, a rock doesn't expect anything. It's just sitting there. That's what you said in your first talk. Then tonight, we're expecting something.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's also wasting time. Expecting something is wasting your time as well, because you are not going to get anything.

S: So wasting time is not part of your feeling, then. You don't feel like you're wasting time.

TR: It doesn't really matter what you do, you're still wasting time. You don't have to make a martyr of yourself, saying, "I feel great because I'm wasting my time. I'm being a perfectly good Buddhist and a good meditator, because I'm wasting my time."

S: So wasting time with that attitude . . . that really isn't an attitude that you want to cultivate.

TR: Wasting time's not an attitude. It's just a fact.

THREE

The Star of Bethlehem

TO UNDERSTAND THE relationship of awareness and being, we have to look into the notion of being at this point. There are all kinds of approaches toward being. Being good, being bad, being sensible, being crazy. Beatitude [be-attitude]. All kinds of notions of being. But when we talk about being in relation to awareness, we are talking about unconditional being. You just be. Without any questions about *what* you are being. It is an unconditional way of being.

Unconditional being is a state of mind that is involved with a certain attitude. You might say, "Could that be unconditional mind if it is involved with an attitude? If it is also an attitude, we couldn't define it as unconditional being." True. But oddly enough, even unconditional being requires an attitude in order to develop to the unconditional level. We have to make some condition in order to develop unconditionality. We cannot begin perfectly. Otherwise it would cease being the beginning and become the end, an achievement.

The reason we refer to this whole process as the beginner's level is that it is the level of clumsiness, the level of messiness. It is unstructured, confused, and so forth. There is confusion, messiness, untidiness—and constant dichotomy, constant reference point. But at least we are moving in the direction of unconditional being.

We are gazing at the star of Bethlehem on the horizon. It is far, far away, but still there is hope. A spark of luminosity is there. The land

may be dark, the sky may be gray and black. It might be chilly, and we might be cold, uncomfortable, tired, and restless. But nevertheless, the star of Bethlehem is over there. Human beings hope. The final hope that human beings could ever be hopeful of is enlightenment, the star of Bethlehem on the horizon.

The buddhas, tathagatas, and great teachers have developed skillful means throughout the ages. Their approach is to hold up enlightenment like a carrot in front of a donkey. There is a carrot thousands of miles away shining, and you have to walk and walk and walk and go get it. The donkey doesn't have the carrot at this point, at the beginner's level, but he has to be inspired. So a faraway inspiration is provided. Something is taking place way off there on the horizon. There is a big space, a huge desert landscape.

The point (apart from all this poetic imagery) is that we need hope, the powerful hope of attaining enlightenment in this lifetime. We need that hope because of having to relate with the constant chatter that goes on in our mind, the emotional ups and downs of all kinds that go on, the disturbances that we experience, the constant, ongoing process taking place in our state of being. We need a reference point connected with that.

Hope can be categorized into two types. Spiritual aspiration is one, and the hope of gaining power is another. As far as aspiration is concerned, the students need to relate with a spiritual friend, a *kalyanamitra* in Sanskrit, *gewe she-nyen* in Tibetan. A spiritual friend is very important. You cannot start even at the beginning of the beginning without relating with a person who has gone through this particular journey and achieved results, enlightenment. It is necessary to have that kind of reference point, a lineage holder, a craftsman. You have to have information. You have to gather information about the handicraft—how the knowledge is passed down. You have to relate with somebody who knows how to make the dharma part of a visible world rather than letting it remain a myth. The spiritual friend, kalyanamitra, is a person who avoids a speculative attitude toward the teaching. He keeps it from being mythical. He brings it about in reality. He has done it, you can do it. It is possible and visible. It is obvious.

Such a relationship could begin purely through the fame of a certain spiritual friend, or guru for that matter, a person who is reputed to have power over other people's confusion. Confusion doesn't exist when you

meet a certain guru. You could follow such a person by faith, or else you could have a personal experience. You could experience that meeting such a person is very powerful. You could actually experience that in the presence of such a person, you experience your own basic sanity, a sense of solidness. A sense of reality actually takes place.

So there are two choices. Either you could be the blind-faith type, who just believes and worships without logic. Or else you could be the type of person who doesn't believe, who is extremely skeptical, highly opinionated, full of his own philosophies of all kinds. A person like that could still meet a spiritual friend on an eye-level basis and could explore how he is, why he is, and what level of spiritual operation he is performing. That doesn't mean to suggest that to pass your examination the spiritual friend has to be levitating three inches above you or constantly emanating sparks of enlightenment in the form of fireworks. It is the personal relationship that is very important.

Traditionally the guru is described as like the sun shining on the earth. Every aspect of this earth—every flower petal, every leaf, every blade of grass that grows—is related to the sun in accordance with the four seasons. Each flower on this earth has a personal relationship with the sun, although the sun does not particularly personally direct its attention with any bias, does not actually shine more on the rosebush than on the poppy or anything like that. The whole process depends on how much receptivity there is, how much openness.

So personal openness is the important thing, rather than purely living on faith. Faith can be blind or intelligent. Open faith is intelligent, being willing to include one's confusion and one's understanding at the same time. Blind faith is purely going by facts and figures; thinking in terms of quick results; depending on fame, reputation, and so forth. It is like saying you should read this book because this book is a best-seller. Five million copies have been sold, therefore it must be good. It is possible that five million stupid people bought it and read it. But that's the kind of reference point followed by blind faith.

So in following the spiritual path it is very much necessary to have a personal relationship with a teacher, a kalyanamitra, a *gewe she-nyen*. The spiritual teacher presents you with the star of Bethlehem. He takes you out of your cozy home. Maybe outside, it is brisk or even biting cold. He says, "Shall we put our coat on? Let's just step out and take a look at what's happening in the universe."

So it is a cold winter night and your spiritual friend decides to take you out on a walk. He says, "Put on your boots. Don't punish yourself. Wear a coat, a warm coat. If you like, take a cigar along with you. Now let us take a walk, step out of our mud house or our plastic house or whatever we are living in, and walk around. Watch the steps at the door when you go out. It's rather dark out. Give your eyes time to adjust from the light inside to the dark outside. Let's step out, but be careful, watch your step. Don't tread on the dog shit on the sidewalk." He's very practical, very careful. He takes you out on this cold winter night, and you can hear every grass stalk covered with frozen dew crunching under your feet. Then, once you have made a relationship with your ground and your vision has adjusted to that kind of night light—maybe it is a new moon and there is no moonlight—then the stars appear very bright. There may be occasional clouds at the edges of the horizon, but there is the star of Bethlehem shining, shivering because of the cold weather.

So the spiritual friend's role is to take you out for a walk to look at the star of Bethlehem. "Take a look. We are going to go out *there*. Our trip begins tomorrow. Maybe we should walk or maybe we should drive or fly or take a train to see the star. Whatever." Then you get a personal experience, which is mutual between you and the spiritual friend, and then you have a goal, the idea that you want to get to the star of Bethlehem—enlightenment. It is a real experience at that point, no myth. It is not an optical illusion at all. There is the star of Bethlehem out there shining, and it is not a matter of conmanship at all. It's a real experience, very real. According to the Zen tradition, it is known as a satori experience. Or it can be called the meeting of two minds. A person has shown you a certain way of handling yourself, your emotions, disciplines of all kinds. But the main point here is making enlightenment real, rather than purely a myth.

Until we've had this experience we might think, "It might work, let's take a chance." But somehow it doesn't become practical enough. We've been taking those kinds of chances for a long, long time, since we became involved in the circle of samsara. We thought we were going to be made happy one day through our striving, speeding, trying to grasp, trying to create a comfortable nest. We have done all kinds of guesswork, and we are hoping still. We never gave up hope. But somehow it actually didn't work. It wasn't a brilliant scheme, shall we say. It was rather a dumb and stupid one, in fact. We can't blame the historians or the phi-

losophers or the scientists, particularly, or the creator of this universe. We can't even blame ourselves. It happened by accident, through karmic chain reactions. So let us not take a vengeful attitude toward anybody: "My mother messed up my life; my father messed up my life." Those blamings and pathetic gestures are becoming old hat and unreasonable. So back to square one. Meet a spiritual friend who shows you the star of Bethlehem, enlightenment, and then start the journey immediately.

Here the sense of being is that having shared a mutual experience with your spiritual friend, there is something taking place. That's the sense of being. Whether that sense of being is created artificially or very naturally and organically doesn't really matter. It *is* an experience already. It *is* an experience in any case. Let's not question its validity from a metaphysical point of view or philosophically, scientifically, or domestically. We don't have time to make sure, to get a signature on the dotted line, to take out an insurance policy. And it is not only that we don't have time, but there is something more than that. This is not a business transaction. It is personal experience.

If you are a mother who has borne a child and the child is starving, you cannot blame your child, your infant, saying, "It's because you didn't bring any money along with you when you were born." That would be absurd: "We are starving because you didn't bring any money along with you." It is a karmic situation that is taking place, all along, throughout the whole thing. We are confused, utterly, as far as we know. We are confused to the point where sometimes we don't even know that. But we are confused in any case. Trying to find out who we can blame our confusion on is a further act of confusion. That takes us away from the practice of the actual discipline of meditative training, just takes us away from it.

It boils down to this: nobody has fucked up your life, really. The only thing that fucks up your life is that you actually feel somebody has pulled a trick on you or that you have pulled a trick on yourself. And as a matter of fact, there's no you. You don't even exist, you don't exist at all. So nobody's pulling a trick on anybody. Even you don't exist. You are just a myth, a mythical truth.

Within that understanding of mythical truth, we practice meditation. We sit at the level of the myth of freedom. That might be a myth—the star of Bethlehem might be a myth—but we have seen it, we have experienced it.

So you need enormous discipline, committing yourself to a spiritual friend and committing yourself, because of the spiritual friend, to yourself. And sitting practice provides an enormous help. You can't even begin to call yourself a follower of buddhadharma if no basic training of the mind is involved. In order to perceive buddha and dharma, one has to have devotion. In order to have devotion, one has to train to develop devotion. This may be very clumsy at the beginning, but it is necessary. Starting with the hinayana level of discipline, satipatthana and vipashyana practice are extremely important and powerful. They are absolutely necessary if you want to follow the path properly, thoroughly, and completely. Enlightenment is very complete, total. There's no such thing as fake enlightenment. It's real experience. It's real life.

Student: You said that even we don't exist, we're a myth. Is enlightenment also a myth?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You. You don't exist. Nor I. I don't exist.

S: Does enlightenment exist?

TR: Not even enlightenment exists.

S: Does devotion exist?

TR: Devotion is knowing that you don't exist. It's the information that someone gives you that you don't exist. And you experience that, that it's true: "I don't exist." That's the act of devotion. Devotion is language, media to communicate that message. Devotion acts as a mailman who brings you mail.

Student: You talk about having a personal experience of the teacher, the enlightenment experience. But what I've understood you to say about enlightenment is that it isn't an experience. So what's happening at that moment? Is it enlightenment, or is it still an experience? Is there still somebody there experiencing something?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Enlightenment is no longer regarded as experience. Experience is like blotting paper that absorbs ink. The blotting paper has a good experience by absorbing the ink. This requires two entities to work together. But in this case, it is not experience from that point of view. It is total. The notion of a razor blade cutting itself.

S: If it was total at that moment, why would it end?

TR: It doesn't end, that's the whole point. Enlightenment is eternal.

It doesn't end. I mean that's the whole point of liberation—once you are liberated, it is forever.

S: So the experience with the spiritual friend is just a glimpse—

TR: A glimpse of that freedom.

S: And if you went to see your spiritual friend and wanted to surrender your ego to him and didn't have a glimpse, was that because—

TR: You're still wrapped up in the notion of freedom. The whole thing about the glimpse seems to be very simple.

Student: Enlightenment doesn't begin either, right?

Trungpa Rinpoche: What do you mean by that?

S: It doesn't end because it doesn't begin.

TR: Well, that in itself is a beginning. Because it doesn't end, it doesn't begin, and it *is.*

Student: If I don't exist, why bother?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I beg your pardon?

S: If I don't exist and enlightenment doesn't exist, why bother trying to . . . I don't have the right words . . . why bother?

TR: That is the sixty-dollar question. (It has gone down in value.) Everybody's asking that: "Why bother?" But in order to find out why you should bother, you have to find out why not? That problem hasn't been solved. As long as the twelve nidanas—the links in the karmic chain reactions—continue to exist. . . .

Student: In some of the Tibetan literature I've read in translation, I ran across one phrase that really stuck in my mind. "The attainment of human birth is a mighty opportunity that is not to be frittered away." Could you comment on that in the light of what has just been said about nonexistence and why bother?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's very simple. This life is very valuable. Human birth is very important. You have a chance to practice, a chance to learn the truth, and still the question of "Why bother?" keeps cropping up again and again. You see, the path actually consists of "Who am I? What am I? What is this? What isn't this?" all the time until enlightenment is actually achieved. The question "Why bother?" has never been answered. It becomes one of the mantras of the path. "Why bother?" goes on all the time.

Student: You said that enlightenment was a real experience and also said that enlightenment doesn't exist.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Because it doesn't exist, therefore it's real. When something exists personally, experientially, and unconditionally, it becomes a mirage, fake. A lot of people maybe find that the experience they have at Disneyland is more real than the experience they have in their city life. The mirage seems to be more real.

Student: It's like a mirror. You think the mirror is real.

Trungpa Rinpoche: You are real in the mirror, that's right. But that still is the mirror's interpretation of you. And therefore it doesn't exist. But nonexistence is the most valid thing of all. The highest existence is nonexistence.

Student: So enlightenment as a real experience is just a mirror.

Trungpa Rinpoche: More than a mirror. A supermirror. That's why in tantric language, we speak of mirrorlike wisdom—the real experience of nonexistence. Cutting through all kinds of conceptualizations and everything. The experience of vajralike samadhi.

Student: What does making friends with yourself mean?[5]

Trungpa Rinpoche: That you are very rich, resourceful, and that there is a working basis in you, working bases of all kinds. That you don't have to reform yourself or abandon yourself, but work with yourself. That your passion, aggression, ignorance, and everything is workable, part of the path.

Student: Are you talking about self, oneself, selves?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There's no self.

S: So you're working with thought?

TR: There's no thought. There's *is*. Thoughts are interpretations of what *is*, spokesmen of nonexistence. The clouds exist because the sky exists. The sky exists because there's light that shows us blue sky. But once you get out to outer space, you don't even see blue sky. You don't even see clouds anymore.

Student: If there's no self, how do we really make friends with it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Because of that. Since there's no self, there's no

threat. You are not threatened by anything, because you don't exist. Therefore the world is a bank of compassion.

S: So everything is all right?

TR: So to speak.

Student: You said hope was very necessary. Usually you talk about giving up hope and encourage us to adopt hopelessness. And I actually experience that the more I hope, the less I'm able to breathe. It's like if I have a lot of hope, I can't even move, because I'm so afraid I won't get what I'm hoping for. I'm so concentrated on getting something. It seems only when I give up hope, just for a minute, that I have any choice or any room.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, giving up hope is also an act of hope. You have been encouraged to take that path of hopelessness, so it is actually more of an encouragement.

Student: Does energy exist or love exist? Or are they just myths?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I hope they exist. Better if they exist. But maybe they don't exist. Maybe love doesn't exist, but it *is*. Love is. Energy is. Rather than "exist." It's the same kind of distinction as: if you don't exist, you are. If energy doesn't exist, energy is. If love doesn't exist, love is.

Student: How does one work on oneself?

Trungpa Rinpoche: One just begins at the beginning. It's very simple. There's no how. When you ask how you should do things, it's like trying to buy a pair of gloves, so you don't have to touch, so you don't have to stress your hands. One doesn't have to think about how, one just does it.

Student: Rinpoche, if there's no self, no enlightenment, no thought, and no memories, then how is it that you're able to tell us what you've experienced and what you know?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Because they don't exist. Seriously. Because things don't exist, things *are*. In fact, actually it might be more correct dharmically to say, things *is*. It's not quite grammatical, but things is. There's enormous clarity out of nonexistence.

S: What perceives that nonexistence?

TR: By itself.

Student: It came to me that all the three yanas are happening simultaneously. So then, does one have to isolate the hinayana from the mahayana and vajrayana in order to reach the goal of the hinayana?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it would be safer, much safer to begin at the hinayana level, because we need a lot of training. A lot of students have to start with the path of accumulation, which is the level of the ordinary person. At that level, just learning to be an ordinary person plays an important part. That's the starting point, and one has to start in one place at a time. It's like having to chew properly before you swallow. Of course, if you chew efficiently, maybe you can chew and swallow at the same time, but that depends on your experience.

S: Is it possible, though the hinayana is where one starts and that is one's focus, that the rest may be happening anyhow, though that is not one's concern?

TR: Anyhow, yes. There is a star of Bethlehem anyhow. There is enlightenment. It actually does exist, and people have achieved it. It is real. You could experience it.

Student: What is the difference between the hopelessness you have described previously and the hope that you talk about now?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Same.

Well, friends, we should close our seminar. I have to go out to New Jersey and perform a wedding at a Jewish country club. But before I go, I would like to emphasize that it is worthwhile to think very seriously about the fact that if you are interested in treading the path of meditation practice, before you learn any gimmicks, you have to get yourself together. Renunciation and desolateness and aloneness or loneliness is very all-pervading. But at the same time, you cannot have a sense of renunciation, a sense of the spiritual path, without that openness of crisp, clear, winter-morning air. From the point of view of openness, meditation is not regarded as either particularly pleasurable or particularly painful. And by no means is it regarded as a magic trick that will give you instant enlightenment or instant bliss. It is a very manual experience, a very personal experience. One has to explore. One has to sit and discipline oneself constantly, all the time. Which occupies twenty-four hours of one's day.

I would like to mention that I have written a book called *Cutting*

Through Spiritual Materialism, and it is worthwhile getting that book, which is a kind of extended seminar of the type we have had here. A lot is written there about what we have discussed, and it is particularly suited for a Western audience. Another very powerful book is *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa,* translated by Garma C. C. Chang. Also the late Suzuki Roshi of Zen Center in San Francisco has written a book, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind,* which is a very powerful book, very direct, very domesticated, very personal experience. His is a fatherly voice of some kind, which is very powerful and important. My other book *Meditation in Action,* like *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind,* tries to communicate very simple ideas to people about the spiritual path. Also, if you have further interest in the techniques of shamatha, vipashyana, and satipatthana, there is a book called *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* by Nyanaponika Thera.

It is very necessary to do these readings to establish a knowledge of the fundamentals of buddhadharma. People in the past have worked hard and put a real and definite effort into their practice, their discipline. They have worked very hard for you people, ourselves. We should appreciate those people who worked hard on their discipline in order to be able to transmit energy and wisdom to us. They are worthy of admiration. Thank you.

Part Two

BARNET, VERMONT
SEPTEMBER 1974

ONE

Me-ness and the Emotions

WE ARE GOING to discuss the meaning of "awake," which is connected with the practice of vipashyana, or insight, meditation. As a starting point, in order to work with the process of meditation, we have to understand our basic psychological makeup. That could be a long story, but to be concise at this point, let us say that mind has two aspects. One aspect is cognition. That is to say, there is a sense of split between I and other, me and you. This basic sense of split helps us to identify who we are, what we are. Conveniently, we are given names—I am called John, or I am called Michael, and so forth. In general we have no idea beyond the names. The names given to us are so convenient that we don't have to think behind them. We just accept ourselves as being named so-and-so. If someone asks you, "Who are you?" and you say, "I am Tom," that's regarded as a very smart answer, and usually nobody asks, "Well, who and what is Tom?" But if you are asked further questions, the next thing you go to is, "I am a banker" or "I am a cab driver." You shift to your profession. You end up jumping back and forth among those external identifications, and usually you never get back to the "me" level. That's the way we usually handle our life. But this time we are going to go beyond the names to the basic mind. We are actually going to find out who we are and what we are. This is the starting point for understanding the mind.

Our mind has this quality of "me-ness," which is obviously not the other, not you. Me-ness is distinct from you, other, the rock, the tree, or

the mountains, the rivers, the sky, the sun, the moon—what have you. This me-ness is the basic point here.

There is a general sense of discomfort when you refer to yourself as "me," which is a very subtle discomfort. We usually don't acknowledge or notice it, because it is so subtle, and since it is there all the time, we become immune to it. There is a certain basic ambivalence there. It is like dogs, who at a certain point begin to relate to their leashes as providing security rather than imprisonment. Animals in the zoo feel the same thing. At the beginning they experienced imprisonment, but at some point this became a sense of security. We have the same kind of attitude. We have imprisoned ourselves in a certain way, but at the same time we feel that this imprisonment is the most secure thing we have. This me-ness or my-ness has a painful quality of imprisonment, but at the same time it also represents security rather than just pure pain. That is the situation we are in at this point. Every one of us is in that situation.

This me-ness is not painful in the sense of outright suffering, like what you get from eating a bottle of jalapeño chili peppers. But there's something behind the whole thing that makes us very subtly nauseated, just a little bit. That nausea then becomes somewhat sweet, and we get hooked on that sweetness. Then if we lose our nausea, we also lose our sweet. That is the basic state of mind that everybody feels.

When the first of the four noble truths talks about suffering, this is what it is talking about. There is that very subtle but at the same time very real and very personal thing going on, which sort of pulls us down. Of course there are various occasions when you might feel on top of the world. You have a fantastic vacation by the ocean or in the mountains. You fall in love or you celebrate a success in your career. You find something positive to hang on to. Nobody can deny that every one of us has experienced that kind of glory. But at the same time that we are experiencing that high point of glory, the other end of the canoe, so to speak, is pushed down into the water a bit. That big deal that we are trying to make into a small deal continues to happen. Sometimes when it comes up on the surface, we call it depression. We think, "I feel bad, I feel sick, I feel terrible, I feel upset," and so forth. But at the same time, it is really something less than that. There is a basic, fundamental hangover, an all-pervasive hangover that is always taking place. Even though we may be feeling good about things, we have the sense of being stuck somewhere.

Often people interpret that sense of being stuck in such a way that

they can blame it on having to put up with their parents' hang-ups, or on hang-ups resulting from some other part of their problematic case history. You had a bad experience, you say, therefore this hang-up exists. People come up with these very convenient case-historical interpretations, maybe even bringing in physical symptoms. These are the very convenient escapes that we have.

But really there is something more than that involved, something that transcends one's case history. We do feel something that goes beyond parents, beyond a bad childhood, a bad birth, a difficult cesarean—whatever. There is something beyond all that taking place, a basic fucked-upness that is all-pervasive. What Buddha calls it is ego, or neurosis.

That is the first of the two aspects of the mind we mentioned. It's something we carry with us all the time. I'm afraid it is rather depressing.

The second aspect of mind, which comes out of this one, is what is popularly known as emotions. This includes emotions of all types, such as lust, hatred, jealousy, pride, fear—all kinds of things. However, the word *emotion* is questionable. By calling them emotions, we come to look at them as something special—"my emotions"—which brings a rather unhealthy way of looking at ourselves. We think, "If only I could get rid of my emotions, my outrageousness, then I could function peacefully and beautifully." But somehow that never happens. Nobody has yet achieved a state without emotions and still had a functioning mind.

From the Buddhist point of view, this second aspect of mind is not emotion as such; rather these eruptions that occasionally take place in our mind also are regarded as thoughts. They are part of the thinking process; they are a heavier instance of the thinking process, rather than a phenomenon of a different type, as though there were a special disease, like smallpox or something, called emotions. They are just a heavy-handed flu.

The first aspect of mind is mainly occupied with duality, the basic split, the sense of being fundamentally alone. This second aspect goes beyond that; it is highly occupied, extremely active. It produces day-dreams and dreams and memories and stores them in the "akashic records," or whatever you would like to call it.[6] It stores them all over the place, and it reopens them and reexplores them whenever we run out of material, whenever we have a conflict or a confrontation with the other. We are constantly trying to work out our relation to the other. It's like your dog meeting somebody else's dog. There is a growl, a sniff, a step

forward, a potential rejection, or maybe an acceptance. That kind of thing is constantly taking place. Dogs do it very generously. As far as we human beings are concerned, obviously we are more subtle, but we are less generous because we have more me. But still this process goes on constantly—we do that when we confront our world.

This cannot just be called emotion; it is something greater, more overall. The thought process escalates to a level of high intensity—so-called emotion. But this second mental faculty is actually a confrontation process, a communication process that goes on all the time. And that confrontation and communication consists of thought patterns alone—nothing else. Sometimes your thought looks, sometimes your thought speaks, sometimes your thought listens, sometimes your thought smells, sometimes your thought feels. It's a thought process that takes place.

This is also connected with the process of sense perception. According to the Buddhist tradition, there is a sixth kind of sense perception, which is actually mental. It is the fickleness of mind, the sixth sense, which acts as the switchboard that all the wires come into—from your ears, your nose, your eyes, your tongue, your body. These sense organs report their messages to the central headquarters, the switchboard, and the switchboard delegates certain activities by way of response.

So that is basically the way the whole mental process works, which does not give us any grounds for separating thought process from emotions. All these aspects are part of the same process that takes place.

In studying vipashyana, we are going to discuss dealing with those thought processes in the practice of meditation. But first it is necessary for you to understand the basic ground, what the basic mechanism is: who is going to meditate, and what we are going to meditate with. We are going to be talking about the way of working with thoughts, with the second aspect of mind. We have very few resources at this point for working with the first aspect of mind, the basic fuckedupedness. That mentality of dualism, or the split, cannot be handled directly, I'm afraid. But hopefully it can be uplifted by dealing with its products.

We could say that the thought process, including the so-called emotions, is like the branches of a tree. By cutting step-by-step through the elaborate setup of the branches, we come to the root, and at that point the root will not be difficult to deal with. So the thought process seems to be our starting point.

You might say, "Wouldn't a good strategist cut the root first?" Obvi-

ously, he would; but we are not in a position to do so. Actually, if we started by trying to struggle with the root, the branches would keep on growing, and we would be completely and helplessly engulfed by the rampant growth of the branches and the fruits dropping on our heads.

So Buddha's psychological approach is a different one. We start dealing with the leaves and branches. Then once we have dealt with that, we have some kind of realization of the naked truth, of the reality of the basic split. Then we begin to realize the first noble truth, which says that the truth is suffering, the truth is that hang-up, that problem.[7]

In order to understand the first noble truth, we have to understand how to live with "emotions." We will have a certain amount of time to discuss that in this present seminar. Now perhaps we could have a discussion.

Student: We start work with what we normally think of as emotions, with the thought process as a whole, which is the branches and leaves of the trees. And the cognitive process is more the root, which we get to later?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's right. In order to scrub the floor, first we have to clean it off. Once you clean it off, you know what you are doing. It's a reasonable way of handling the whole thing. You start with what you have immediately available, which brings you an enormous contact with reality. Whereas if you were to try to relate to the basic duality, you would just find it impossible. Instead of trying to work brick by brick, it would be like trying to push down a whole wall. You would end up with a defeat. So it's better to start with small things that are quite pronounced rather than starting with the fundamental subtleties and trying to sort out the whole problem.

Student: Do these fundamental subtleties come up disguised as fantasies?

Trungpa Rinpoche: They are more or less the same thing as the fantasies, but they can't really be disguised. The root of a tree can't be disguised as the leaves. The root has to remain the root in order to hold up the leaves and branches. The basic subtleties act as a sustainer, so they have to keep their position.

Student: Emotions are accompanied by physical sensations. Are those also thoughts?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. That does not mean to say that you don't feel physically, but your body is also your thought. For example, if you cut your finger while you're chopping an onion, you have a bleeding thought. But it's real. Thoughts shouldn't be dismissed as "just thoughts." Such a thought is so real, it's tangible.

Student: Would you mind clarifying those two aspects of mind again? The first one is characterized as the basic duality between me and the other; and the second one, a worse case, involves intense thoughts. Is that right?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's quite simple. The first one is basic duality, and the second one is the activities of that.

S: Can they be separated as a first form of thought and then a second?

TR: They are not the first or second thoughts, but the roots and the branches.

S: The first one is the root.

TR: Yes.

S: So we have to get at the root through the branches.

TR: Yes, we have to start with the branches first.

S: So when we see through the very highly differentiated thoughts and sensations that we're involved with, then we come to the more fundamental thing between self and other.

TR: Yes. If you start by tackling the self and other, in tackling that you start more branches, so you have an endless job.

S: I see.

TR: Anyway, that's what we said.

Student: I grasp what you're saying abstractly, but I'm wanting to put it into some experiential framework so it's not just an abstract idea.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, that's why you are here, obviously. We will discuss the details in the coming talks. To begin with, I wanted to make clear what subject we would be discussing and give you a basic map. That might be somewhat abstract or not particularly pragmatic at this point.

Student: Is the sixth sense you mentioned related to intuition?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's a lot of things—intuition, paranoia, hope, and fear—all kinds of things. Intuition is included, but in this case intuition has some kind of a reference point. Therefore you have intuition that is different from the enlightened kind of intuition, which is wisdom. Here, this is intuition on a very crude level.

TWO

Recollecting the Present

THE BASIC APPROACH to understanding the mind is a process of gradually making friends with oneself. That is the first step.

At first, we feel what we are and what we have is somewhat chaotic, and we feel alienated from ourselves. One sterile approach of traditional spirituality is to play heavily on one's inadequacy, one's weakness. You are encouraged to recognize that more and more, until you reach the point where you can't actually stand yourself. You get involved in all kinds of self-flagellation, self-blame. You feel poverty-stricken. You are filled with a sense of how bad you are, how badly you behave—how fucked up you are, basically. This is the trick that is played on you by some forms of traditional spirituality.

People in certain evangelical traditions, who are particularly interested in converting people to their faith, make use of this trick to make their teachings seem more glorious. They are unable to raise their doctrines or teachings any higher or make them any deeper or more direct and personal, so instead of raising the level of consciousness or of the doctrinal or meditative understanding of their teaching, they choose to lower the other area—that of the people they are dealing with. They reduce them lower and lower—to the level of sewage. Through doing that, their own level automatically seems to become higher, more impressive.

So they play on your guilt and your weakness and whatever emotional fuckedupedness exists in you. They tell you that if you keep going the way you are, you are going to get worse, you are already worse, you

could get even worse than that, and eventually you will be no more than a turd if you don't pull yourself together.

That is the kind of trick that has been played on people—which is by no means meditative or connected with spiritual practice in any way. It is a kind of spiritual-materialistic way of inspiring someone to embark on the spiritual path: to reduce them to nothing.

The approach of meditation is the opposite of that. In that approach, we give people a chance at least. At least we provide some kind of a handle or stepping-stone. There is a working base, there are possibilities, there is inspiration. There is something happening within one's state of being, which is meditation practice.

Nevertheless, the approach of meditation is not all that easy. You've got to do it yourself. The teachers and the teachings can only show you how to do it, that's the closest we can come. But then you have to do it yourself. You can't expect complete hospitality. Your car can only go as far as the garage; it can't drive you into the bedroom. Once your car has stopped in the garage, you have to walk to the bedroom; you have to take off your clothes, you have to get in bed. A certain effort is involved. No matter how tired and how helpless you are, the hospitality offered by your transportation doesn't carry you beyond that. Unless you fall asleep in your car, which often happens, both metaphorically and in actual fact.

So students are given as much assistance as possible, which consists in showing them the path. Showing the path in a down-to-earth, practical way is traditionally known as "grandmother's finger-pointing." The grandmother is old and wise and knows how to handle the details of life, and she points with her finger and tells you to do this and this and this. "Grandmother's finger-pointing" is a particular term of the Kagyü tradition of Buddhism in Tibet. Showing you how to do it in this way is the closest we can get to helping you along the path.

But there is a need for some acknowledgment and some willingness on the part of the student. You have to be willing to follow the grandmother's finger-pointing. If that is the case, then the next question is quite obviously, what are we going to do? The answer is, practice meditation.

There are two types of meditation practice. One is called *shamatha,* which means "development of peace." The other is called *vipashayana,* which means "development of insight." We discussed that in basic out-

line in the last talk. We cannot develop complete vipashyana unless we have some background as to what shamatha is all about. In terms of the metaphor of the tree we used earlier, shamatha is not cutting the branches or leaves of the tree. That comes much later. Before we do that, we have to acknowledge the basic tree*ness*—the branchness, the leafness—how the whole setup is seen and experienced. That is an important prerequisite for vipashyana. We can't skip that point. We must discuss that before we discuss vipashyana, the development of insight.

In shamatha, there is a meditative technique, which involves working on a natural resource—breath, your breathing. We start with your breathing. That is always available, as long as you are alive. You always have your breath as you always have your heartbeat, whether you are excited or you are asleep or you are in a normal state. You always have to breathe.

Your breathing is the closest you can come to a picture of your mind. It is the portrait of your mind in some sense. It goes in and goes out—it sort of fertilizes itself so that the next breath can take place. It is not a stationary object. It moves and it stops and it moves again. It sustains the body; it is a source of life. Also it is the source of your speech and the source of your thinking. If your heartbeat stops, your breath stops, you can't think, you drop dead. So the breath is a statement of life and a statement of the mind at the same time. In order to eat, to smell food and chew it, you have to breathe. If you're tired, you breathe heavier. If you're relaxed, you breathe easy. If your neck is bent, you snore. If your sleeping posture is straight, you don't snore. When you are hungry, you breathe in a special way; when you're full, you breathe in a special way; when you feel happy, you breathe in a special way; when you feel sad, you breathe in a special way. Breath is changing constantly, but at the same time it constantly keeps its rhythm. Breath, which is yearning for space, stops at the end of the out-breath. By surrendering the breath, the yearning for space, at the end of the out-breath, you get more space. Therefore you can live longer—you can take the next breath. You have two kinds of space. There is the outer space as you breathe out. And before you breathe in, there's a gap. You breathe in outer space, and then as you breathe in, you have another kind of space, which is the inner space within your bodily system. Then you have a gap and then you breathe out again. So there is action, stillness, action, stillness taking place constantly. Which is the portrait of your mind.

Therefore the breath is chosen as the basis for working on your practice of meditation. Working with the breath is recommended. The breath is not separate from you, but on the other hand, it is not quite you. Thus there are enigmatic qualities to the breath. And the same goes for your mind. Is your mind *your* mind? Maybe. But then what is you is uncertain. So we never actually come to a conclusion as to who is who or what is who. We just constantly hope for the best. Hopefully, we could survive, we could continue in this vague way.

You might be extremely articulate and precise and sharp, but still you have no idea where all this comes from, where all this goes. But the basic point here is just that the state of mind has to match with the breath, you have to relate with the breath. In the beginning stage of shamatha, you work with your breath, you don't concentrate on your mind. That is impossible to do. Actually, concentrating on your breath is also impossible, because your breathing shifts and changes, and so does your mind. So in connection with shamatha, we prefer to use the word *mindfulness* rather than *concentration.*

Concentration has certain connotations. The idea seems to be that you focus on a particular object or a particular subject until you develop a complete photographic relationship with it; and then you can let go and the concentrated state of mind remains. This is very tiresome and very specialized and too industrious in some sense. Therefore Buddhist textbooks say that *concentration* is a dangerous word to use in connection with the practice of meditation. Instead we refer to this practice as mindfulness.

If you are fully with your mind, you could be there, on the spot. But at the same time, you do not have to focus your whole system on one point of reference. In fact there is a very interesting dichotomy here, which comes from the fact that you have no understanding of who *you* are. You don't know who *you* are. You haven't even got a clue, or that is the clue. Maybe we could use the clue as you. But that is as far as we get, rather than getting to the actuality of what *you* is all about. Therefore you cannot concentrate *your* mind. The closest you can come is to be mindful, mind full. The very vague state that exists, known as consciousness, has never seen itself, but it is there. It has never felt itself, but it moves, it happens. Now that state of what we call mind can be full. We can be mind full.

The Buddhist scriptures talk about resting or abiding in recollection.

The best English equivalent of this is *mindfulness*. "Recollection" in this case does not mean dwelling on the past but being in the present. That flow that takes place—you could be with it.

Our present state of mind is based on a reference point. Without a reference point we can't think, we can't eat, we can't sleep, we can't behave. We have to have some reference point as to how to eat, when to stop eating, how to walk, when to stop walking, how to conduct our life—which way? This way, that way, the other way, some other way altogether. All those choices are guided by a reference point. "This is good to do, therefore I am doing this; this is not good to do, therefore I am doing that." There are choices upon choices taking place constantly. Attending to those choices and their reference points is known as recollection, *smriti* in Sanskrit. This is not exactly bringing the past to the present, but still in order to be in the present, you need memory, which is an automatic thing.

Our mind functions that way usually—in terms of reference point, which equals memory. In making your body function, there are reference points all the time: stretching your arm, lifting your cup and bringing it toward your mouth, tilting it a little bit, drinking, then tasting and swallowing. As you lift and stretch your arm, you do not forget to hold the cup. There is a coordination taking place, which is entirely based on memory. Without that we can't function. On that basis we have developed certain behavior patterns that make it possible for us to handle our lives. This coordination enables body and mind to be synchronized. And that synchronicity is based on a recollection of the present. Recollecting the present in this way is called being mindful. Mind in this case is equal to recollection. Being mindful is being there, fully minded. If you have a full mind, you have a full reference point. Therefore you are *there*. You relate directly to the present situation, which is precisely what meditation—shamatha practice—is all about. Just being there, very simply, directly; conducting yourself very precisely, relating very thoroughly and fully.

The reference point in shamatha is the breath. The traditional recommendation of the lineage of meditators that developed in the Kagyü-Nyingma tradition is based on the idea of mixing mind and breath. This means that you should be with the breath, you *are* the breath. Your breath goes out and you go out. Your breath dissolves into the atmosphere and you dissolve into the atmosphere. Then you just let go

completely. You even forget meditation practice at that point. You just let go. There is a gap. Then naturally, automatically, physiologically, you breathe in. Let that be the gap. Then you breathe out again. Out, dissolve, gap. Go out again, dissolve, there's a gap. Go out, dissolve, there's a gap. You continue to proceed in that way.

There is a moment of space, the gap. We could say there's a moment of weakness, if you like. The whole thing should not be too heroic. And then when you relate with the out-breath, there is a moment of strength. Then the moment of weakness: you dissolve, you have nothing to hang on to. Then you pick up doing something again—going out with the out-breath.

That is the basic technique of shamatha. It has to be very precise and direct.

Then there is walking meditation, which has also been recommended. You walk mindfully. You pay heed to, say, your right leg. As your weight shifts, the pressure releases, and the weight is put on the left leg. So your right leg is free, and then you lift it off the ground, swing it. Then it touches the ground, presses the ground as your weight is put on it, and your left leg is released. That is also very precise. One does not have to walk like a zombie in order to do that. You walk with a reasonable, natural rhythm; let it be natural, just as with the breath. When you walk that way, very precise decisions have to be taken: this is the time to put weight on this leg, then the other leg, and so on. So the whole process becomes very precise and very direct and very clear. At this point, you have no intention whatsoever in doing this. You are not thinking, "If I do this, I will attain enlightenment tomorrow." You have no concern about anything else but doing your practice of sitting or walking meditation.

This is what is called discipline in the Buddhist tradition and patience as well. Participating in that ongoing process without purpose behind it. Students are advised to do this in a very orthodox way, to pay full attention. But this doesn't mean that you have to be solemn or serious, particularly. If you are serious, that takes away your mindfulness. You get very busy being serious and you lose your mindfulness. Your mind has to be full, rather than one-eighth or one-hundredth. It has to be right there on the spot. We have the expression "mind your own business," which means, "Leave me alone, let me be myself." At this point you mind *your* business. Just be there, directly and simply be there.

To do that is to experience the leaves that exist on the tree. You begin to find out who you are somewhat, or who you are not. Whatever—that particular metaphysical problem doesn't matter very much at this point. We can sort that out later.

What is your mind? Students might begin to think about this. As you practice, you might come to conclusions regarding hidden emotions that begin to come up to the surface like dead fish. And you might experience all kinds of contrasts in your point of view on the world, seeing it upside down, downside up. At one point, you might feel you are on top of the world; at another point, you might feel you are at the bottom of hell. The whole time the basic point is to be very precise.

This approach is not only for the sitting practice of meditation alone, which is heavily recommended, but it also applies after the sitting practice of meditation is over, to what is called the postmeditation experience. That is to say that your life and your commitment to the practice of meditation is not a matter of a patch here and a patch there that you are trying to sew together. Your life is committed to meditation overall, like a blanket. It is from twelve o'clock to twelve o'clock. Your life is completely infested with the practice of meditation. When you are eating, you eat. When you are washing your dishes, you are there with it, right on the spot. It is not a matter of trying to work with your breath and wash your dishes at the same time, which would be cumbersome, unnecessary. In the postmeditation, if you are washing your dishes, you do it properly, completely, fully. Be with that; be with the tap, with the water, be with the dirty dishes; be with your arms, your hands, your coordination with your mind. Be with the water and the faucet and the soap and the sponge. Let us be them together and make a good job of washing the dishes. It is a matter of being on the spot with everything that way. From that point of view, it is a life commitment, a twenty-four-hour job.

It has been said that you can't practice meditation without postmeditation mindfulness. Mindfulness throughout our lives when we are not doing sitting practice is also a part of the practice of meditation. One has to have some kind of self-consciousness in order to lead one's life properly, to be meditative.

Often the term *self-consciousness* is used pejoratively, which is not fair. Or we could say that there are different kinds of self-consciousness. One idea is that self-consciousness has to do with feeling guilty, feeling hurt,

feeling pain. But that is not the kind of self-consciousness we are talking about. That kind of self-consciousness is a punishment to oneself. But that is more than self-consciousness. That is heavy-handed egotism. Something else is taking place there. The kind of self-consciousness we talk about in relation to awareness or mindfulness is just being yourself, simply. You possess two arms, you have a sink, you have dirty dishes, and you do a good job. Not for the sake of doing a good job. You just do it, and it turns out to be a good job by accident. That kind of self-consciousness is no problem. It is a way of handling yourself properly, being yourself. Once you take that kind of attitude, you just do it.

It's not a matter of being a great meditator who does a beautiful job of washing up. It's without praise, without blame. As long as there is a notion of trying to prove something, you have the painful kind of self-consciousness, self-consciousness in the pejorative sense. That is the case as long as you're concerned about the end product. "Look what a beautiful job I did. That's because I studied and meditated."

That is the kind of problem that a lot of Zen students fall into. There is some problem having to do with a sense of showmanship. "We sit and therefore we do a good job. Come to Zen!" It's like every Zen student is a self-existing Zen advertisement.

The basic point is to be precise and direct and without aim. Be there precisely. There is a need for mindfulness, which is the equivalent of self-consciousness, if you like—light-handed self-consciousness, which does exist. As long as we feel we exist—which we don't, but never mind about that problem; we actually don't exist, but we think we do, and that provides us with a working basis; we don't have to start 100 percent pure—as long as we feel we exist, let us be full. Let us begin that way. That seems to be the basic point for the practice of meditation. If I say too much, probably you'll be confused, so let's stop there.

Student: When we speak of postmeditation awareness, does that mean we should try to be more aware or that it happens spontaneously because of meditation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: One *does* try; not try-try, but just try.

S: Sounds like quite a fine line.

TR: Yes, that is what we are talking about. It is a very special way, but it does not have to be a big deal, particularly. You just have this aura that you are part of this meditation livelihood—basically, that your life

is the practice of meditation. In fact, you find it difficult to shake it off. You might say, "I'm sick of the whole thing; now I'm giving up my awareness and my meditation completely." Okay, do so. But then you find that something is haunting you constantly. You gave up meditation, but there you are—you have developed more awareness, more mindfulness. That always happens to people. So this is not a matter of something being imposed on you, but there is that element of something-or-other that goes on all the time.

It's like being in the world. You are in the midst of winter and you have that awareness; awareness of that wintry quality is there all the time. If you are in New York City, you don't have to meditate on it. You don't have to develop a special awarenesss of New-York-Cityness. You pick up the New-Yorkness anyhow, whether you are indoors or outdoors. There is an overall awareness, that you are in that particular location. So it's more of a general climate than a particular effort. But that climate has to be acknowledged occasionally. That's very important.

Student: You were talking about breath and the movement of the breath being a mirror of the mind. Couldn't that be extended to the whole body? Wouldn't the movement of the whole body also be a mirror of the mind, the thought processes, and therefore another path of meditation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you could stretch in that direction, but there's a bit of a strain there.

S: I don't see that.

TR: You don't move all the time, unless you are restless; but you breathe all the time.

S: No. Our human bodies are designed to move almost all the time. In fact, it's almost impossible to sit perfectly still the way we are designed with our center of gravity.

TR: I'm not trying to tell you you should fight your center of gravity, particularly. But there are moments of stillness, relatively speaking. It is the breath that makes your body move. Your lungs always expand and contract, but that's sort of an accidental thing. The reason why meditation practice should be based just on your breath, not on your body, is that there are possibilities of exploring the parts of your body unnecessarily. You start to try to shape your body like your mind, which has a hint of neurosis in it. In fact, that happens a great deal in the sensory-

awareness schools of meditation. And there has been a great interest in T'ai Chi Ch'uan that has gone along with the enormous interest in touch and bodily movement. But there is a limit on how you can do that. There is a tendency to create something special. Whereas when you just sit with the breath, you don't have to breathe specially. You just do it naturally. It's part of your pulse.

S: But since most of our time is spent in movement, why not use movement as a form of meditation?

TR: I think you can't do that. At this point I have to be very orthodox. You can't do that, because it would be very convenient and there would be no discipline. For example, you have to set aside a time for sitting practice that is especially allocated for that practice. Whereas with the approach you suggest, you could just say, "Well, I'm going to visit my girlfriend and I have to drive. So on my way to my girlfriend's, I'll use driving as my meditation."

S: But as long as it's mindful, why couldn't that be done?

TR: That approach to mindfulness becomes too utilitarian, too pragmatic—killing two birds with one stone. "That way I meditate and I get a chance to see my girlfriend at the end too." But something has to be given up somewhere. Some renunciation somewhere is necessary. One stone kills one bird.

Student: You talked about mindfulness and breathing, and breathing as a portrait of the mind. You also talked about being mindful of the various thoughts and feelings that come and go. You described those as the branches of the tree, which I gather is what we're supposed to attack.

Trungpa Rinpoche: At this point we are not in a position to handle those, to deal with them, to cut them down. Now we just have to see that the branches do exist.

S: I'm confused about this. Is breathing the tool we are fashioning to eventually cut down the branches?

TR: No, the mindfulness.

S: The mindfulness. Of which the breathing is—

TR: The breathing is just crutches.

S: Yeah. The breathing is the crutches to bring about the mindfulness, which we can then later develop toward the emotions. Okay, that's it!

TR: That's it.

Student: You say that we don't exist, that we only think we exist. I see that as being part of the grand illusion. Could you elaborate on that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's a lengthy discussion. But maybe I could hear from you what you think about whether you exist or you don't. Do you think you exist?

S: I think that—

TR: Be honest.

S: We are here.

TR: Yes?

S: Whatever these vibrations are are here. We are here.

TR: Well, who are we?

S: Who's asking the question?

TR: That's it. Yes. Who is it. But that's no proof.

S: Does the enlightened mind perceive—

TR: It doesn't matter about the enlightened mind. Let's talk about *this* mind, samsaric mind. When we talk about enlightened mind, it tends to become a myth. You expect the enlightened mind would see rainbows all over the place. But how about us, who see garbage all over the place?

S: I'm not sure how we can exist and not exist.

TR: You don't. Where are you at this moment?

S: I'm here.

TR: What's here?

S: Planet Earth.

TR: Planet Earth. Well, that's a good beginning. What location on Planet Earth?

S: It doesn't matter.

TR: Oh, come on. You are in Vermont! We have a tent above our heads and we have ground to sit on. Maybe you're sitting on a cushion to make yourself comfortable. And you're wearing a sweater so that the cold doesn't become too heavy-handed on you. So we are here, in the tent in Barnet, Vermont, Tail of the Tiger. But then who is here? I don't mean your name. Other than your name. What is here?

S: Some sort of consciousness.

TR: What is that? Consciousness of what?

S: Self-consciousness.

TR: That's just a catchphrase. What does that mean? Consciousness of what? [*Pause*] Don't think too much.

S: Consciousness of the breeze.

TR: What's behind the breeze?

S: My mind.

TR: What is that?

S: I wish I knew.

TR: You don't know?

S: I guess that's why I'm here.

TR: You mean that's why you're not here? [*Uproarious laughter*] Good luck, sir.

Student: Is the problem that I do not exist, in other words, that there's nothing existing, or is the problem that something exists but it isn't I? It isn't the I that I think I am, but there is the existence of something.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's saying the same thing. Something equals nothing. If you are the number one, one necesssarily depends on zero. One is something and zero is nothing. In order to have one, you have to have zero. Which is nothing. It doesn't make any difference—something and nothing are the same. Otherwise you couldn't have a cash register. I think there's no problem with something and nothing.

On the other hand, there's something else, which is nothing that's real, but it's something that's nothing. That's where we get confused—when we're trying to figure out the whole thing. This is a long research project, and I don't think we can sort it out tonight. But you are very courageous.

Student: In your previous talk, I got the impression that thoughts and emotions were dependent on duality.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes.

S: But it seems that people who have overcome duality, saints and so on, still have thoughts and emotions.

TR: Yes.

S: Well, I think you have to bring in a third factor in order to complete the picture.

TR: Well said. So what's behind that? You didn't finish your statement.

S: Well, this is why I asked the question.

TR: Maybe that's your statement. Making things into a question is a very easy thing to do. This is part of the problem. In fact, the question

mark is a symbol of nonexistence. You write a little poem and then you send it up like a balloon into the air. Hopefully, someone will catch it and appreciate it. That's a question—it goes up. But perhaps we are branching off from our basic thing.

Student: I don't know if this is branching off even further, but this practice you've been describing seems very sensible in a way—becoming more aware, becoming more in touch with what's happening in your own mind and outside of you. But I wonder why tantra is necessary. Why isn't this enough, if one could eventually do it properly?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it's a matter of attitude, actually. Tantra is not something that is there to save us from a problem. And tantra is absolutely not necessary at this point. This is a complete thing. But this thing becomes tantra eventually. You might say you always want to remain a teenager. "I have everything in my life, I know everything, I go to school and learn everything. This is my life. Why do I have to get old?" You don't have to get old, but you do become old one day. This particular experience we are talking about becomes tantra at some point, rather than tantra being imposed on you as a necessary requirement. The shamatha-vipashyana experience matures. That is tantra. It happens automatically.

S: So tantra is just sort of an exposition of what happens.

TR: Yes. That's why we can speak of the three yanas being linked together. The whole development is regarded as a maturation process rather than something that is imposed on you. Nobody says to you, "Now you are finished with hinayana, you should change to second gear and do mahayana, then change to the top gear, which is tantra." You don't ever change that way. It's a gradual process of development that becomes tantra automatically when it reaches maturity. You don't ask, "Why is it necessary to have fruit on the trees?" This particular plant is beautiful, and it's doing its best. It's necessary to look at the situation wholeheartedly at this point. And maybe that kind of looking actually could be a tantric view.

THREE

The Portable Stage Set

WE SHOULD PROBABLY discuss the various types of backgrounds with the help of which we operate in our lives. These backgrounds are vague, uncertain, dubious for us. I am talking about the kind of background we create in our minds in every situation—when we enter somebody's room, when we sit by ourselves, when we meet someone. This kind of background is partially made up of the sense of basic space that we carry around with us all the time, and it is also colored by our particular mood of the moment. It is a kind of portable stage set that we carry around with us that enables us to operate as individuals. We constantly produce a display, a theatrical scene. For each situation we create the appropriate backdrop and the appropriate lighting. We also have the appropriate actors, mainly ourselves, who appear on the stage. We carry on this kind of play, this theatrical game, all the time, and we are constantly using our antennae, so to speak, to feel out the total effect our stage set is having.

In vipashyana meditation, we deal with this kind of background, our portable theater. Whether we are a big deal or a small deal, there is always some kind of a deal happening. Vipashyana works with that big deal or small deal, that great deal, large deal, littlest, expansive, cunning, or clever deal—whatever setup you have chosen to establish. In practicing vipashyana, instead of keeping very busy setting up your theater, your theatrical stage, your attitude is changed so that there is a sense of questioning how we produce this background, why we do it, whether

we have to do it or might not have to do it. This is still on the level of inquiry in some sense, but at the same time it is experiential.

In vipashyana, you as the practitioner experience the game that you are playing in setting up your theater. From that you pick up a new way of dealing with the whole thing without its being a game. This is the sitting practice of meditation. When you sit, you don't sit for the sake of creating a display or a particular effect. It's a very private thing in some sense. In sitting practice, you relate to the radiation you are creating. Before you begin sitting, this radiation was being created purely in order to impress or overpower the audience. In this case, the situation is reversed. You experience your own radiation face-to-face rather than playing with it in order to impress or overpower your audience. You have no audience when you sit and meditate, or you are your own audience.

Even in this situation, however, it is possible for subtle little tricks to take place. You congratulate yourself for sitting and being such a good boy or good girl, and try to make that into a display. It's very subtle. The games can be peeled away one after the other like the layers of an onion. The games continue to happen, obviously, but somehow you can deal with this.

You have had the basic training of shamatha practice and from there you begin to expand. I would like to stress again that the shamatha experience is extremely important. Without that foundation, the practitioner is not at all in a position to experience vipashyana. But with that foundation, the practitioner can begin to expand the meaning of mindfulness so that it becomes awareness. Mindfulness is being fully there, and awareness is a total sensing. In awareness, all happenings are seen at once. This could also be called panoramic vision.

Panoramic vision, in this case, is having a sense of the entire radiation that we create. We possess a certain mannerism or a certain style that is reflected outward. When you sit, this becomes purely a thought process. You develop a sense of appreciation of things around you, not one by one, but totally. It's like light radiating from a flame or a light bulb that expands outward. However, we find that this radiation has no radiator. If you look into who is doing all these tricks, producing this display, this radiation, there is nobody. Even the *idea* of somebody doesn't exist. There is a pure sense of openness, a sense that you can relate with the living world as an open world.

At this point, we are only just introducing the vipashyana experience.

Later we will go into it in greater detail. What it is necessary to understand now is that the vipashyana experience does not proceed to the level of a game, but remains purely at the level of experience, the living experience of awareness (as opposed to mindfulness).

Awareness, in this case, is not awareness of self but awareness of the other. The difference between the two is that if you are aware of yourself, it is awareness of yourself being aware of yourself aware of yourself aware of yourself aware of yourself. There is some kind of incest taking place. Whereas if you are just being aware, that is openness, a welcoming gesture. You include your doings within your realm of awareness, so you don't punish or you don't watch. You don't question, particularly, but you just be. That seems to be the basic approach or the basic policy in insight meditation, vipashyana.

Do you understand what I've been saying?

Student: I don't understand about the radiation without a radiator.

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you have a radiator, the radiator has to work itself up to the level where there is enough radiation to be expanded or reflected outward. It remains tied up with that, so there is really no radiation.

S: Doesn't radiation cease to exist if there is no radiator?

TR: Radiation can only exist if there is no radiator. Things can only flow if the flow is the process that's happening rather than somebody instigating the flow. Then it's deadly.

Student: You said that awareness is not awareness of self but of other. Do you mean that the actions and reactions coming from oneself have no greater priority or value than what seems to be occurring in the outside world? That it's all one field?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Awareness of other is the same idea as radiation without a radiator. Awareness takes place, and that awareness is 100 percent all by itself. There is no need for you to watch your awareness as a careful speculator or instigator. One of the problems is, if you have a very efficient instigator, then your product is killed. That's the kind of self-existing suicide that takes place all the time, which is known as neurosis.

Student: So if you have a man standing by a mountain, his awareness would be purely of the mountain.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. He's not important because the mountain is around him.

Student: If you draw attention to the mountain as opposed to the self, you are assuming that there is still a self to be gotten rid of. I thought that a truly open awareness would be directed toward the mutuality of this self and the other, or their mutual nonexistence. I can't see singling out the other at the expense of the self or vice versa. Isn't that giving a sort of negative importance to the self?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I don't think there's any problem there, particularly. You could be open to the mountain and see the mountain more freely without you. On the other hand, if you have a stomach upset or a headache and at the same time are trying to look at the mountain to cheer yourself up, you somehow have a problem trying to maintain your suffering and trying to look at the mountain. You have a complete experience neither of your headache nor of the mountain.

Student: But I always have something going on like a headache. I never have a perfect condition for just looking outward. There's always something going on with me. I may feel joyful, for example, and then the mountain reflects that joy. It's not that I'm projecting it in an egocentric way, but my joy, my happiness, my tranquillity, and the mountain are in a mutual intercourse. I don't know what a mountain is by itself or what I am by myself.

Trungpa Rinpoche: You do admit that if you have a stomach upset, the mountain also has a stomach upset.

S: Yes, but I don't know what the mountain would be or anything would be without there being that process of intercourse.

TR: That's not a problem. You're not going to lose your world if you don't have this definite intercourse. You don't have to extend your belly button into an umbilical cord. That was cut a long time ago, when you were born. It would be too complicated to renew your umbilical cord. Approaching things that way is part of the problem, in fact: if I have a world, is the world my prey? Or is it that the world is just the world and you're just you? There is a separateness that is in fact more of a grand union than anything else could be. Because of the separateness, there could be unity. Unity doesn't have to be glued together. In fact, that's what's known as imprisonment. You don't have to keep track of yourself

particularly. You see the reflection of yourself anyway; the mountains are you anyway. If you get a headache, the mountains get a headache too, in your way of looking at them.

S: So there's no need to emphasize the belly button connection.

TR: That's right, that's right. If the mountains have a headache, just let it be that way.

Student: How do you stop yourself from giving the mountains an aspirin?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Is there any problem? Well, I'm not saying that you should feel pain and that therefore you should torture yourself. You can take an aspirin and, if you're severely sick, you can go to the emergency room at the hospital. There's no problem. I don't see any problems. We are not talking about starting a revolt against the world, guerrilla warfare against the rest of the world. We are talking about how to look at how to be with it, and I don't see any particular problems. You take aspirin, which is also sick at the same time. Because you are sick, your aspirin is sick as well. And then you take it, and because misery loves company, aspirin cures your headache.

Student: Could you talk about the vipashyana experience in terms of the analogy of the tree we were using before?

Trungpa Rinpoche: We are beginning to work on the level of minding the tree's business. We are at the point of picking up a pair of secateurs and beginning to crop the foliage leaf by leaf. This is the point we're at, but we haven't gotten into the details yet.

Student: You've talked about panoramic awareness mostly in terms of awareness of environment. What I'm wondering is whether the vipashyana mode of operation would alter one's way of experiencing one's own thoughts or one's experience of, for example, the dream state. Would that be altered at the level of panoramic awareness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Those experiences are also your environment. There is no environment other than your thoughts. Let's say you hit somebody, and this enemy of yours is approaching you again. You create a hostile environment, which is your thinking, your doing. If you get highly inspired by seeing some object associated with enlightenment, you create an environment of inspiration. Thoughts are your environ-

ment from that point of view, and there's no other environment besides that. You see, the whole thing is not really mysterious. It's always there, and it's very literal and very obvious.

Student: In meditation, I become aware of my theater performance, my lighting, my acting, and so on. Then I stop meditating and I'm back in the theater again.

Trungpa Rinpoche: What's the problem?

S: Well, I thought there was some implication that from going and meditating and becoming aware of that theater, something would change. Or do I simply come back into the theater and be theatrical again?

TR: Well, not quite the same way. I think the real point is that we're talking about discipline. Actually, in a real theater group, in the Open Theater or other avant-garde theater groups, people feel they are disconnected from the theater world when they have to undergo some disciplined practice, which they usually call warming up. The term *warming up* is a euphemism. In fact, warming up is a demand. There is the demand that before you turn on to performance, you warm up. The name deceives you, because while you are engaged in this discipline, you lose your theater.

S: Is theater going on here right now?

TR: Yes, but that's because you're not going through any particular training at this moment. You're just listening. It's very convenient and entertaining. But when you sit and meditate and you have an ache in your legs or a stiff neck, then the beautiful theater world begins to diminish.

Student: May I say something? I'm enjoying this theater. This is a real experience for me, as real as meditation, and you're here doing theater, and I'm imagining that this is a real experience for you too.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's not enough.

S: What are we doing here, then?

TR: We're regrouping. At this point, we're regrouping rather than this alone being the goal. That is by no means true. What we're doing is not the goal. It's not the final product—as though you paid your money, got your ticket, and you're here watching, beautifully experiencing the final product. No.

S: It is part of the process.

TR: Part of the process, obviously.

S: Just as important as the discipline.

TR: Sure. But it's necessary to have the personal experience of facing yourself, which brings a reduction in your sense of showmanship. Meditation is the only way. Write that down.

Student: Isn't what creates the theater the sense of one's own importance? If you think you're someone very important doing something very important, you have a tendency, as you say, to overwhelm the audience with your presence. But if you've got no sense of self-importance, or if you can manage to lessen your sense of self-importance, there's no theater. Who are you acting for? You're just here.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I'm afraid it doesn't work as simply as that. Even if things are unimportant, you make theater out of the unimportantness. You always do that.

S: Why does theater always imply something contrived, not spontaneous, rehearsed?

TR: It does because there's a sense of self-consciousness and a sense that you are the center of the game.

S: That's because you think you're important.

TR: Not necessarily. You might think you are terribly unimportant, but you can still sit on your toilet seat. And make yourself the center of the universe.

S: Why would you want to do that?

TR: That's it! That's it! That's the big question. We have to find out by sitting and meditating. That's the only way.

S: Well, I think—

TR: You can be told why you're doing so-and-so, but then you create further theater in relation to having been told that, you see?

S: You mean everything we do is theater.

TR: Yes, except meditating.

S: Why isn't meditating doing theater?

TR: If you meditate long enough, you find out that it's not so pleasant.

S: Doing theater isn't so pleasant either.

TR: It gives something.

S: It's horrible.

TR: It gives you some sense of survival.

S: You've got a sense of survival anyhow. You're here, you're surviving. I don't understand where the theatrics come in.

TR: They come in. That was a very theatrical remark you made.

S: If you say so.

TR: I do say so.

S: Okay. Now tell me why I don't exist. I have this belief that I exist. It's very real. And when you tell me that I don't exist, I get upset and frightened, and it really gives me a stomachache.

TR: That's it, that's it.

S: What's it?

TR: You are very threatened, right?

S: Very threatened. It's a terribly threatening idea.

TR: That's right. If you really did exist, you wouldn't feel threatened.

S: I'm threatened because you're supposed to know something that I don't know. And if you state that we don't exist, then, who knows, maybe you're right.

TR: Well, that's it.

S: You're the one that knows. As far as I'm concerned, I exist.

TR: Not necessarily. There are some possibilities that you don't. Look, that you came here, took the trouble to come here, is an expression of your nonexistence. Your listening to my crap and getting upset and threatened is an expression of your nonexistence.

S: Because I don't understand it. It's very hard to understand.

TR: That's right. There's nobody to understand, therefore you can't understand.

S: Well, it's very scary to think you don't exist. Then what the hell is going on?

TR: Good luck, madam.

S: I have good luck.

TR: With my compliments.

S: Thank you.

Student: In abhidharma studies and other writings, it seems to be indicated that the point of shamatha practice is to develop jhana states. Without those, the literature seems to say, it is impossible to go on to the analytical processes involved in vipashyana. But you always caution us not to get involved in the concentration or absorption that leads to

the jhana states, but to start out with mindfulness and go straight into panoramic awareness. Are these two different approaches that will both work, or will we have to get into jhana states eventually?

Trungpa Rinpoche: If I may be so bold as to say so, this approach is superior to the one that encourages jhana states. If you become involved with jhana states, you are still looking for reassurance—the reassurance that you can experience the bliss of the jhana states—before you get into precision. I present it this way partly because that is the way I learned it myself from my teachers. My teachers trusted me. They thought I was an intelligent person, a smart kid, and that I could handle myself all right if they presented the teaching that way.

That is the same way I feel about relating with North American audiences. Every one of you people has done some kind of homework or other, though for the most part very painfully. You have some sort of ground that makes it possible to communicate things very freely to you, in the same way I was taught myself. So I have enormous trust in the audience at this point. People can grasp the point of view behind the basic training being given to them, so there is no need to reassure them through the experience of jhana states. Jhana states are pleasurable states in which they could feel something definite and therefore conclude that the spiritual path really does exist, that everything is true after all. That approach is not necessary. You don't need the proof, which is a waste of time. Everybody is here, and they have already proved to themselves, maybe negatively, what's wrong with life, and they are looking for what might be right with it. In that sense, people have done their homework already, so they don't need further proof.

Jhana states are part of what is called the common path, which is shared by both Buddhists and Hindus. The application is that if somebody wants to get into a religious trip, theistic or nontheistic, they could be reassured through the jhana states that the religious trip does give you something definite to experience right at the beginning. It's a kind of insurance policy, which we do not particularly need. I think we are more educated than that. Nobody here is a stupid peasant. Everybody is a somewhat intelligent person. Every one of you knows how to sign your name. So we are approaching things with some sophistication.

S: So as one proceeds on the path through the yanas, and gets into the tantric yogas and everything, there is still no need to work on the jhana states?

TR: From the vipashyana level onward, it's no longer the common path, it's the uncommon path. You are getting into enlightenment territory rather than godhead territory. So jhana states are unnecessary.

They are similar in a way to what people in this country have gone through in taking LSD. Through that they began to realize that their life had something subtler to it than they expected. They felt that something was happening underneath. People took LSD and they felt very special. They felt there was something behind all this, something subtler than this. This is exactly the same thing that jhana states provide—the understanding that life isn't all that cheap, that it has subtleties. But in order to get into the vajrayana, you don't just keep taking LSD, which is obsolete from that point of view. That was just an opener, and you were *exposed to a different way of seeing your life. You saw it from a different* angle than you usually do. So in a way, taking LSD could be said to bring about an instant jhana state. In a way, it's much neater. Maybe LSD pills should be called jhana pills.

Student: I'm interested in the point where you are self-conscious in the mindfulness of shamatha and then you switch into becoming panoramically aware. Does that switch happen in flips, in flashes? How does it work?

Trungpa Rinpoche: What are you trying to find out, really?

S: I'm trying to classify my experience more, so I know when it's shamatha and when it's vipashyana.

TR: I don't see any problems there. When you experience shamatha, it's very literal, very direct, concise and precise. When you experience vipashyana, things begin to expand. Your mindfulness becomes more grown-up. You have a multifaceted awareness taking place, everything all at once. That is possible. It works. It has been done in the past, and we are doing it now. It's very simple. It's just like switching on a light switch—there's no problem, particularly.

But there are side effects, obviously. You start thinking, "What is this about to be? What should happen now?" and all kinds of things like that, which is unnecessary garbage. As far as that's concerned, when you meditate every day, it's like shaving every day. You shave off unnecessary little pieces of hair by meditating. So shave every day.

FOUR

Boredom—Full or Empty?

ONE OF THE POINTS of basic vipashyana practice is developing what is known as the knowledge of egolessness. That is to say that the awareness that develops through the vipashyana experience brings nonexistence of yourself. And because you develop an understanding of the nonexistence of yourself, therefore you are freer to relate with the phenomenal world—the climate, atmosphere, or environment we have been talking about.

Unless there is no basic center, one cannot develop the vipashyana experience. On the practical level, this means that vipashyana is experiencing a sense of the environment, a sense of space, as the meditator practices. This is called awareness as opposed to mindfulness. Mindfulness is very detailed and very direct, but awareness is something panoramic, open. Even in following the breathing techniques of mindfulness of breathing, you are aware not only of the breathing but also of the environment you have created around the breath.

As far as dealing with heavy-handed thoughts, emotions, is concerned, there is no way of destroying or getting over them unless you see the reference point that is with them. To begin with, seeing this takes the form of awareness of the atmosphere or environment. If you are already aware of the atmosphere beforehand, then there is a possibility that you might have a less intense relationship with your heavy-handed thoughts. That is one of the basic points.

Once you are aware of the atmosphere, you begin to realize that thoughts are no big deal. Thoughts can just be allowed to diffuse into

the atmosphere. This kind of atmosphere that we are talking about is, in any case, an ongoing experience that happens to us in our lives. But sometimes we find we are so wrapped up in our little game, our little manipulation, that we miss the totality. That is why it is necessary for students to begin with shamatha—so that they can see the details of such an eruption, such a manipulation, the details of the game that goes on. Then beyond that, having established some kind of relationship with that already, they begin to see the basic totality.

Thus vipashyana is understanding the whole thing. You might ask, "What is this 'whole thing'?" Well, it's not particularly anything, really. This "whole thing" is the accommodator of all the activities that are taking place. It is the basic accommodation, which usually comes in the form of boredom, as far as the practitioner is concerned. The practitioner is looking for something to fill the gap, particularly in the sitting practice of vipashyana meditation, where the quality of nonhappening becomes very boring. Then you might get agitated by the boredom, which is the way of filling it up with some activities.

So in this case, the background is boredom. There are different types of boredom that we usually experience. Insecurity, lack of excitement, being idle, nothing happening. In this case, in vipashyana, the boredom we are talking about is a sense of being idle, and this is unconditional boredom. The experience of vipashyana awareness has a quality of all-pervasive thick cream. It has body, at the same time it is fluid, and it is somewhat challenging. Therefore, as one's development of awareness is taking place, one doesn't become spaced out particularly, not at all.

When we talk about being spaced out, we are talking about being empty-hearted. When we are empty-hearted, then the dazzling light of emotions begins to irritate us. We can't grasp anything and we are ready to completely freak out. Whereas the vipashyana awareness is something much more tangible, in some sense, than this empty-heartedness. It is something very personal that exists. It usually accompanies any kind of activity, not only in sitting practice alone.

For example, sitting and listening to this talk, you have developed or created a certain type of attitude. You are directing your attention toward the speaker; but also you know at the same time that you and the speaker are not the only people in this tent, so there is the sense that you are sitting in the middle of the inside of this space—underneath the

ocean, so to speak. And awareness brings about your relating with that particular experience, which is tangible, real, experiential.

When awareness relates to that type of experience, it is called insight. Sometimes this is spoken of in terms of light, luminosity. But this doesn't mean something fluorescent. It refers to the sense of clarity that exists in this experience. Once you feel that basic all-pervasiveness, then there is nothing else but *that* (the other), and *this* (oneself) is long forgotten.

Maybe at the beginning *this* tried to struggle, to fight with *that,* the all-pervasiveness. But though *this* might struggle, at some point the all-pervasiveness is all over the place, and a sense of suffocation begins to develop. And that subtle suffocation turns into boredom. That is the point when you are actually getting into the all-pervasiveness of the vipashyana experience.

This is just the beginning stage of vipashyana that we have been describing. And I would like to emphasize once more that we are not talking about hypothetical possibilities. You can actually experience this in your life, in your being. And in fact, potentialities of vipashyana are already prominent in our experience; they take place all the time. But we have not actually acknowledged them or perhaps even seen them.

Student: There are experiences in meditation where a certain openness takes place. But this openness seems to be different from boredom. It seems to punctuate the boredom. It is more exciting. It seems to be the opposite of boredom.

Trungpa Rinpoche: At the introductory level, when you first have such experiences, obviously you feel excited. You feel that this is something new you've gotten. But as you use such experiences as part of your practice, you wear out the novelty of them very quickly—particularly in this case—and it all turns into a very powerful boredom.

When you are in a sauna, you like it at the beginning, and you like the idea, the implication, of being in a sauna. You like the sense of cleaning up and loosening up your muscles, and so on. But if you are stuck there, if somebody put a lock on your sauna-bath door, then you would begin to feel the heavy-handedness of it. You would get bored and frightened at the same time.

Student: You spoke of suffocation turning into boredom, and boredom then moving into some kind of openness. It sounds to me as though

boredom is in fact a gut response to the fear of losing oneself, or losing selfhood. Is that the correct way of seeing it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I see it that way too, yes. The boredom is the atmosphere. While you are bored, you are not aware of *this,* but you're aware of the atmosphere, which creates boredom. That is a very interesting twist that takes place there, which doesn't usually happen in your ordinary life.

S: Instead of being afraid that the self is disappearing directly, you turn that outward, toward the situation.

TR: That's right, yes. That's the awareness experience that happens. Well said, sir.

Student: When you're meditating and all of a sudden there's a sound in the room, like somebody coughs, sometimes you feel so susceptible to it that you feel very shattered. It's very magnified, very physical, electric. Is that an example of openness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There's something faintly suspicious there. It is possible that you become open and susceptible. But if you don't have a sense of the atmosphere as filled with body, with texture, then you are spacing out rather than connecting with shamatha or vipashyana. There is a definite need for you to deal with the, so to speak, dense, humid atmosphere.

Student: How does being aware of the body and texture of the atmosphere, as you just said we should be, differ from being aware of the theater backdrop?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's the same thing, actually. In the theater you see not only the stage alone, but you have already created your own texture around the theater hall, and that thing, the stage, is more or less a highlight. If it weren't for that atmosphere, you wouldn't bother going to the theater. You'd watch television instead, or a movie. There's a difference between watching a movie and going to the theater. The movie has been produced already, and you are seeing the result. The play in the theater is being performed on the spot. Maybe the actors have their own stories, but still you are taking part in the performance somehow. Something might go wrong. Somebody might fall off the stage and break his neck. Whereas you can't expect that in the movies. All that is part of the texture of the atmosphere.

Student: Is the kind of boredom that develops in vipashyana a different kind of boredom from the irritating boredom you have when you first start sitting?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, I think it is a mixture of both. There are different kinds of boredom, obviously. The boredom that develops from irritation still has a reference point of *this,* whereas the boredom of boredom that develops in vipashyana is more all-pervasive, like having the flu.

S: So this involves more willingness to go all the way with the boredom.

TR: Well, that's the idea.

Student: I thought of the boredom that occurred in meditation as being a problem of relating with emptiness, a problem of not being able to relate to the space because the space is empty. But you seem to be saying now that the boredom arises because you're relating to a space that is full, full of some kind of atmosphere.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Those two amount to the same thing, actually.

S: I wonder how that is. There's the sense of boredom because the space is full, like when you've got the flu. In some sense it seems to me there that your environment is full of you.

TR: Which *is* emptiness.

S: How so?

TR: You see, when we talk about emptiness, we are not talking about a vacancy.

S: Is this emptiness in the sense of meaninglessness or—

TR: No, not even that. We are talking about emptiness as having a body or texture of emptiness, which is the same as saying it's full.

S: Well, does it have to do with the accommodation aspect? Is that what you mean by emptiness here, that there is something to hold the atmosphere?

TR: It's not the accommodation alone, but accommodation as well as the container that's containing.

S: You mean like the edges, the container itself that holds whatever's in it?

TR: Yes, which becomes the same thing as what's in it. For example, if you have a cup full of water, that is the epitome of emptiness. In fact, it's indestructible emptiness.

S: Indestructible because whether it has water in it or not, there's a space there?

TR: No. There's water already; you can't change that. Whereas if it's vacant, then you can fill it up with something else.

S: So acknowledging the water would be like acknowledging space.

TR: I don't think so. It's acknowledging the existence of the cup filled with water rather than any of those partial aspects. If you get involved with the aspects, then you have a problem. The boundary between them becomes problematic. If you acknowledge what is inside as nothing, then the boundary becomes troublesome. The boundary begins to haunt you.

S: So it's a sense of acknowledging the whole thing.

TR: Yes. That's what vipashyana is all about.

Student: I wish you would be a little more specific about the boundary you were talking about. What were you referring to? Is it some sense of the limit of your horizon in the environment? Or is that your self-consciousness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's the idea that you can get away from the boredom. You feel that there is this thing there, and you can deal with it.

S: So this is the beginning stage of vipashyana, and making the boundary would be like the stronghold of ego—

TR: Yes.

S: Still trying to—

TR: Still trying to escape, yes.

S: Trying to contain it somehow?

TR: Yes. Like thinking that if you know the blueprint for meditation, then you can get away from it. You know what's supposed to happen to you, so you can tune yourself that way in advance so you don't have to go through too much trouble.

Student: Would a possible trick of the same sort be to just name your experience or go back to something you know, like a more shamatha-like approach? Just to try and get on top of your experience?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. Anything you can think of. Thinking about the hassles of life is another one. There are limitless outs.

Student: Does that mean that a further vipashyana experience would be the breaking of the cup, breaking of the boundaries?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The cup doesn't have to break. It dissolves. There is no warfare, particularly. The cup becomes water.

Student: In that case, using the word *emptiness* seems to be very misleading. The opposite word would be even better: *fullness.*

Trungpa Rinpoche: Fullness means security to a lot of people. You know, for example, hunger is opposed to fullness. So *emptiness* may be the best word to express fullness.

Student: You spoke of neurosis and you mentioned it in relation to self-existing suicide. I'm wondering whether everything, all neurosis, a person's whole being, doesn't always get back to the basic question of one's existence.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Very much so.

S: Everything I do or think is trying to establish an answer to that question.

TR: Yes, definitely.

S: And is neurosis the ego confusing itself to death?

TR: It doesn't quite die. It prolongs the pain and gives birth to further pain. That's the terrifying part of it. Really stopping yourself completely, right down to nothing, wouldn't be very easy. Somehow, even after suicide, you still have to make sure that you are dead. And then a further attempt to make sure you are dead comes on. So your suicide never ends. That's the tricky part.

FIVE

From Raw Eggs to Stepping-Stones

IN CONNECTION WITH awareness, there is something we should understand about the relationship between open mind and discipline, maybe a difference between the two or maybe a cooperation between the two. In talking about open mind, we are referring to a kind of openness that is related with letting self-existing awareness come to us. And awareness is not something that needs to be manufactured: when there is a gap, awareness enters into us. So awareness does not require a certain particular effort. Such an effort is unnecessary in this case.

Awareness is like a wind. If you open your doors and windows, it is bound to come in.

As far as discipline is concerned, sometimes we have problems or hesitation in relation to the experience of awareness not being desirable. We feel somewhat uncomfortable about being in the state of awareness. It makes us unable to indulge in the usual neurosis, which is seemingly more pleasurable—or at least it occupies our time. But a state of awareness somewhat creates a sense of alienation: we are unable to keep going with our ego's hang-ups and with our ego itself. Therefore, there is often a natural repulsion of the potential of enlightened mind or of enlightened mind itself.

This kind of discomfort always follows a state of awareness, and in many cases it could become quite exaggerated. You deliberately try to cast off that potentiality of enlightenment and a certain sense of fear

connected with it that you don't want to get into. You might call this effort being conscious of yourself or being religious or whatever terminology you might come up with. But the whole thing boils down to this particular hesitation—you don't want to get into the state of awareness.

There is a definite psychological blockage here with a well-known case history, so to speak. There is a desire for the neurosis and less desire for the sanity. However, all the same, when we have been completely eaten up by insanity or neurosis, tremendously hassled by it, a superficial desire does arise to make a long journey to find basic sanity, a desire to seek out a teacher and read books about the spiritual path. But then, when we begin to do it, to put the teachings into practice, the same resistance is still there. It always occurs; it is a common psychological hang-up.

For example, there is the naughty schoolboy mentality. You try to find all kinds of excuses so you won't have to sit and meditate. You constantly cook up excuses to evade the practice. "I have to tie my shoelaces. Let's take some time on that. I know eventually I have to go sit and meditate, but let's just take a little time." Or, "I have to make a quick phone call." All these kinds of little hesitations have their root in a neurosis of a particular type that doesn't want to give in to the possible state of awareness. That is the natural situation concerning obstacles to openness.

Discipline cuts through that—but not by regarding it as a big problem or a big hang-up. It just simply uses the resistance as a stepping-stone. From there you walk into the state of awareness. That way the resistance becomes more of a help or a reminder than an obstacle. This is a question of a real, direct attitude.

Openness and awareness, as I have explained many times before, is a state of not manufacturing anything else; it is just being. And there is a misunderstanding, particularly in connection with vipashyana, which regards attaining awareness as an enormous effort—as if you were trying to become a certain unusual and special species of animal. You think now you're known as a meditator, so now you should proceed in a certain special way, and that way you will become a full-fledged meditator. That is the wrong attitude. One doesn't try to hold oneself in the state of meditation, the state of awareness. One doesn't try painfully to stick to it.

If we take the term in a positive and creative sense, we could say that

awareness is a state of absent-mindedness. The point here is that when there is no mind to be absent, energy comes in, and so you are accurate, you are precise, you are mindful—but absent-minded at the same time. So maybe we can use the term *absent-minded* in this more positive sense, rather than the conventional sense of being forgetful or constantly spaced out, so to speak. So whenever there is a message of awareness, then you are in it already. There is the state of absent-mindedness and mindfulness at the same time.

Absent-mindedness in this case acts as the instigator or evoker of the background, and mindfulness is the occupant of that background. So you are there, but at the same time you are not there. And at the same time you can fulfill your daily duties, relate to your living situation, your relationships, carry on conversations, and so forth. All that can be handled mindfully as long as there is absent-mindedness as the background. Which is very important.

Approached in this way, mindfulness is no longer a problem, a hassle, or a big deal. For that matter, it is not energy-consuming at all. This is a matter of taking a different slant in your attitude. The first step is that you are willing to be mindful. You have to commit yourself. In some sense, you have to take a kind of vow that you are willing to be mindful and aware. This is like saying to yourself, "This is my work for today and for the rest of my life. I'm willing to be aware, I'm willing to be mindful." When you have such a strong and real conviction to begin with, there are no further problems at all. Any further problems are just some kind of frivolity, which tries to overrule your memory that you should be mindful. So once you have taken that attitude of commitment, that commitment automatically brings absent-mindedness, which then results in your being mindful constantly.

So it's a question of commitment, which is also known as discipline.

You might ask, "What kind of commitment are we talking about? Am I supposed to sign on the dotted line? Am I supposed to join the club?" For the most part, neither of those approaches works. Once you join a club, that's it. Your name is on the membership list and the mailing list, and they do the job for you. You really have nothing to do. If you feel bored, you come to the club and you do their little things—ceremonies, dinner parties, celebrations, whatever they have. And you feel nice that you have your private club. You might receive a certificate with the name of the club, or a certificate with your special title done in calligra-

phy and with seals or whatever they have. That's nice to have around the house, but it doesn't really do anything for you. It's just a piece of paper. It was another ceremony that took place in your life. It's gone, it's empty.

So if it's not this join-the-club approach, what kind of commitment are we talking about in this case? It is actual commitment that requires constantly living in a special way. And what is that special way of living? It's just a memory that is a living memory rather than a past memory: the memory that you took a vow that you were going to be an aware person, that you were going to develop awareness throughout your life. That memory. And when you have that memory, it's not dead. It's really a living memory; it's a situation in your life. Having that kind of memory is a present situation, an up-to-date situation. Because of that memory, absent-mindedness occurs, and from that absent-mindedness, mindfulness develops. That is the basic instruction for how to handle mindfulness.

There are a lot of misunderstandings about this issue. People often feel that they have to be specially aware of what they are doing, and they walk that way and they sit that way. They behave as if they had a raw egg on their head. Consequently their life becomes lifeless, rigid like a dead body, and so solemn, so "meaningful." And there's no enlightenment in it; it's all dead. Of course, there is some faithfulness in it, and some kind of joy or pride, but somehow even the presence of those don't serve to cheer those people up. This has been a problem in the way people work with awareness.

When we talk about the process of developing mindfulness and awareness, we are talking about practicing a living tradition, not renewing an old culture, a dead culture. This is a living tradition that has been practiced for twenty-five hundred years by millions of people. It's always up-to-date, and we can practice it the same way as those who came before us. It is a very personal experience, so personal that it is actually workable.

So that seems to be the basic idea of how to conduct one's basic awareness program, so to speak.

Student: I'm very interested in the distinction you made between ordinary absent-mindedness and this special absent-mindedness. I seem to have a great deal of ordinary absent-mindedness, and I was wondering if there was energy in that that could be transformed into the kind that provides the right background for mindfulness.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Forgetfulness is not being absent-minded in the true sense. In that case, you are so much involved in your own world that you lose loose ends constantly. In the true absent-mindedness we talked about, your mind is gone, properly and completely, without anything to occupy it. And I think the only way to shift from one kind of absent-mindedness to the other is the kind of vow we discussed. With that vow, you are making a definite step, a definite effort toward something else. You are already self-involved and forgetful, and this is a step toward something else. It's not particularly a matter of solving the problem of our old-fashioned absent-mindedness by replacing it with a new one, but it's a definite jump. You need some kind of commitment in your life that says, "Now I'm going to do this." That should bring some kind of psychological change. Without that, you can't change, because your habit pattern just goes on and on.

S: It sounds as though the ordinary absent-mindedness is the opposite of the new kind. It's turned inward on itself, whereas the new kind is more opened outward.

TR: I think so too, yes. Well, I think some sort of personal influence is needed—an influence that moves you from one kind of message to another kind of message. If somebody tells you that if you eat a carrot you're going to die tomorrow, that gives you a shock. Then you take a vow: "From today onward, I will never eat a carrot." And then, whenever you think of a carrot, you think of that, and whenever you think of that, you think of a carrot.

S: I'll try not to eat carrots.

TR: That's not the point. Anyway, help yourself.

Student: This commitment you're talking about sounds like something conscious you would do, but it doesn't seem that it could be conscious. It seems like it is something evolutionary. And if it is evolutionary, you can't do it. So how does one make that kind of commitment? How does one approach it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I'm afraid this is very primitive, nothing very subtle. Because we have constantly been deceived by our subtleties. This is a very ordinary, rugged commitment, very low-class maybe, if you want to put it that way. "From now onward, I'm going to do this." It's very conscious. But then you don't hang on to that. Once you've made the commitment, then you have that commitment there, transplanted into

your mind already, and it begins to grow. So you have to have that primitive quality at the beginning. Otherwise, there's no kindling wood to light the big logs. It's very primitive and very literal, and perhaps very sudden as a highlight in your life. But obviously the effects that it has will not be very sudden. Obviously the effects happen slowly. You are not suddenly reformed in one second, but you have the potentiality of being reformed from then onward.

It's like having a birthday party. You don't suddenly go from twenty-one to twenty-two when you blow out the candles. Obviously not. You are becoming twenty-two as much earlier on as later, when your birthday celebration takes place. But all the same, you have to have some kind of landmark. Otherwise, we are too sneaky, and there's no other way of dealing with that.

Student: It's like quitting smoking. You have to keep reaffirming your decision, but at one point, you have to say, "I'm going to quit smoking."

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it's different from quitting smoking. That is giving up something, which has a lot of problems involved in it. In this case, you are taking on something new, which is something more positive than just being starved to death.

Student: You talked about using all those little tricks that we have for resisting meditation as a stepping-stone. Say you notice yourself doing this number—you're five minutes late and you're still tying your shoes, or whatever—you're aware of it and you just keep on doing it. So how does it become a stepping-stone?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Use the resistance as the starting point of your practice. Now you have the resistance and you are going to use the resistance as part of your meditation. You're already meditating. You have awareness while you're trying to delay, you have the wind of meditation already in you. You can't even undo it. You're already plugged in.

SIX

Loneliness

I THINK WE SHOULD realize that the practice of meditation takes us on a journey that is very personal and very lonely. Only the individual meditator knows what he or she is doing, and it is a very lonely journey. However, if one were doing it alone without any reference to the lineage,[8] without any reference to the teacher and the teachings, it would not be lonely, because you would have a sense of being involved in the process of developing the self-made man. So you would feel less lonely. You would feel like you were on the way to becoming a hero. It is particularly because of the commitment that one makes to the teachings and the lineage and the teacher that the meditative journey becomes such a lonely one.

That commitment does not particularly bring protection or companionship or feedback to clear away your doubts or resolve your loneliness. In some way your sense of loneliness is exaggerated by your commitment to the path. The path has been established and you start to take a journey on it. That journey is then up to you. You can read the map, which tells you how far along you are. You can stop at various places for rest and refreshment. But it's still your journey.

Even if you are sharing the journey with other people, those other individuals' experience is different, totally different, in terms of how the journey really affects them. So it's a lonely journey. There is no support, no specific guideline. You may have been told to do this and do that, but that is just at the beginning—so that you know how to be lonely.

So loneliness is one of the basic points. It means not having any

security on this path of meditation. One can't even say that you get moral support. For one thing, as we discussed earlier on, you don't exist; and because of that, security doesn't exist. The only thing that is visible, that apparently exists, is the journey, the loneliness itself. That is a very important point for us to see and realize.

On this path, we are not looking for the grace of God or any other kind of saving grace. There is no sense that we are going to be saved, that someone is going to keep an eye on us so that if we are just about to make a mistake, someone will fish us out. If we had that sense, the journey would become a very sloppy one, because we could afford to play around. We would think that in case we did the wrong thing, we could be fished out or saved. But instead of relying on outside help, in this case, the impetus has to be a very personal impetus. Nobody is going to save us and nobody is going to protect us, so this journey has to be a very personal, individual journey. That's a very important point.

Now, the next question is the role of the teacher, the guru. How is he or she going to affect this process? There is no contradiction whatsoever between being on a lonely, personal journey and relating to a teacher. The role of the teacher is to teach the students what direction to take, to teach you a certain attitude and how that attitude might develop further. And the role of the teacher is to show you that the path is lonely.

In order to hear the clear message from the teacher without any misunderstanding, you have to have a sense of commitment and openness toward the teacher, who in this case is known as a "spiritual friend." He is not regarded as a learned professor, a mad scientist, or a magician, for that matter. Rather, the teacher is a friend who has conviction and enough openness toward himself or herself. Because of that, the teacher can be blunt and direct in pointing out the disciplines of the path. So to hear the clear message from the teacher, you have to have a sense of openness and surrender.

But this does not mean worshiping or adoring the teacher. You just need a sense of basic openness, a feeling that the teacher's approach to the teaching is accurate. The idea is not that it *has to be* accurate, but it happens to be accurate because of a certain relationship of commitment that evolves between you and your teacher. Because of that, the teacher's words become real to you; it's not like listening to a tale or a myth. What the teacher has to say becomes relevant to you.

That is what's called the meeting of two minds. What you experience

and what the teacher has to say make sense together. A definite link of understanding develops. Though the dharma may be only partially understood, it still makes sense, it still becomes some kind of truth.

Your teacher has to be someone who lives on this earth at this very time. One shouldn't kick around such ideas as "I have a heavenly teacher who tells me when I'm in trouble, sends me messages in my dreams, in my fantasies, and in my daydreams. I get these messages flickering through my subconscious jingle bell. The teacher is always there when I need him because he is a heavenly teacher, a celestial teacher." Ideas like this are quite deceptive. You always hear what you want to hear. Nothing is told to you about maybe some things needing correction. And certainly that heavenly teacher wouldn't talk about loneliness and aloneness. He wouldn't give you the teachings of aloneness and loneliness, because that heavenly teacher is a production of your mind. So for that reason it is necessary to have as a teacher a person who lives on earth, who is your contemporary, who shares the same world with you, the world of human beings. It is necessary to make a relationship with such a teacher in the sense of developing an understanding of each other.

Then there is another notion, which is the sangha, the community of practitioners working together. The sangha is also the creation of the teacher and the teaching in a sense. You get information, messages, from being among friends who are also doing the same practice as you at the same time. You might feel that you can take off by yourself whenever you want, that you can maintain yourself without having to be hassled by the sangha, without going through the painful problems of dealing with the rest of the community, these friends around you. But this is partially not accepting the world of the teachings. You want just to have a summit meeting with your teacher and to try to avoid the rest of the flock. You go off in order to be saved from the hassle of relating with anybody else. This is also in part looking for something other than loneliness—looking for security. Although your style of dealing with the whole thing is the style of loneliness, actually dealing with the sangha would make you feel more lonely. And that is very painful.

The sangha carries the atmosphere of the teacher and the teaching and the lineage. Sharing that experience together makes more sense. Relating with the teacher becomes also relating with the community, the sangha. But although this process is very necessary, it should not be regarded as a source of security. The idea is not that if you feel strange and

odd, you feel better if you see someone else strange and odd. The idea is not "Misery loves company." The idea is not that because there are a hundred or a thousand or a million people doing the same thing as you, you feel secure because you're not the odd man out. The idea is more that you are the odd man out in any case, and there are lots of odd men out together. You don't confirm each other's paranoia or shyness or sense of insecurity, but the sangha helps—in the long run or even in the immediate situation. For example, if you want to chicken out of your sitting practice and you are in the midst of seventy or a hundred people sitting together, when you are about to get up to walk out, you feel somewhat strange, uncertain. And that kind of very simple and literal encouragement to practice is necessary.

People often have a certain kind of attitude toward the others: "I am above them. I have special credentials, a special intelligence. I don't want to be completely associated with the mass, the flock. When I feel bored or lonely, I would like to chat with them and be nice to them. They're interesting people to talk to. But when I feel really edgy and needy, the sangha freaks me out, so I should avoid them. I should have a summit meeting with my guru in his den." That attitude is problematic. Avoiding pain, avoiding loneliness is a problem. A lot of problems come from avoiding the sense of loneliness, of aloneness, from avoiding the sense of losing the ground of ego.

So it is necessary to have a spiritual friend who can work with you. And also around you and your spiritual friend, there are other, so to speak, lesser spiritual friends who are known as the sangha. They do not take on the role of instructors, but they do assume the role of friends—who are sometimes not particularly overwhelmingly friendly. Or at other times they may be rather kind. But that kind of relationship is necessary.

The whole point is that we have grown up with a very strange relationship to society. Sometimes we like society and are trying to get into it and become a replica of everybody else. You do exactly the same thing as everybody else, and it feels good. You have a social standard to relate to and you have your M.A. or Ph.D. You are a professional person and you have a car of your own. You know how to cook food, entertain friends, and you are humorous and engaging. You are even eloquent and interesting. You are a good host, a good driver, an acceptable person, a nice guy.

But at the same time, you don't want to be like that at all. Your complex about society takes all kinds of forms. Sometimes you want to be above society and bring society up to your level. You are part of an exclusive lodge or club. Only highly evolved people can work with you, deal with you. You are not like the rest of the world, not like the others. You are special, very special. You eat different food. You even drive differently, maybe. You break the law in a different way—with conscious effort. You cook meals specially, and you talk a special way; you articulate differently. You put the accent on the metaphysical or mystical, or on being zany. Society pushes people into this kind of attitude because there are so many repetitions taking place.

On the other hand, sometimes people have the feeling that they can't even make it up to the repetitions level. They feel belittled, uneducated. But then, once you've gotten to that level and you feel you are just like everybody else, you want to rise above this and try to do special things. You acquire special art treasures, which you show. You develop a special handicraft or a talent that you have that is out of the ordinary. The selling point in all this is that it is very special, unlike anything else, that you are a very special person, which is another kind of neurosis that goes on in society. First you try very hard to be ordinary, and then, when you achieve that, you try to rise above the ordinariness.

There are all kinds of different levels and different approaches to trying to ignore the loneliness.

If you are like the ordinary person in the street, working a nine-to-five job, you feel very lonely. And also you felt very lonely before you got to the ordinary level. You felt you had to struggle, that you were wretched, outside of society. And then, when you try to step above the ordinariness into extraordinariness, you also feel lonely. All those attempts are made out of loneliness. The whole time the goal is not to be lonely, to achieve enormous security. So there are constantly inspirations arising out of the sense of loneliness. But at the same time, the loneliness is always rejected. You are always trying to achieve the opposite of loneliness, always looking for companionship. That seems to be the problem.

So we have two kinds of processes here. Rejecting loneliness by using the medium of loneliness; and trying to use the medium of friendship and companionship to arrive at the goal of loneliness. The second one is the dharma way. At the beginning you have your spiritual friend and

your sangha that you work together with. It feels good, fantastic. But once you have been initiated into the path and style and practice of meditation, then your goal is loneliness. You begin to realize that.

Loneliness here is not meant in the sense of feeling alone in an empty room with nothing but a mattress. When we talk about loneliness here, we are talking about the fundamental starvation of ego. There are no tricks you can play; there is no one you can talk to to make yourself feel better. There's nothing more you can do about the loneliness at all. So for that reason, there's a need for a teacher, for the sangha, and a need for practice.

This is not based on a theistic approach—needing protection, needing a savior. As far as that is concerned, everybody is their own savior. The basic point is that the practice of meditation brings all kinds of experiences of uncertainty, discontentment of all kinds. But those experiences seem to be absolutely necessary. In fact, they seem to be the sign that you are on the path at last. So we can't do publicity by having testimonials for meditation practice. If we did, it would be disastrous.

But this has been pointed out many times in the books and the teachings. It has been said over and over that this journey is not particularly pleasant; you have to shed your ego. And still at the beginning there is a certain fascination about it. You start to think, "I wonder what it'd be like without ego. That's another point of view. Let's try it. It might be exciting. After all, we've tried all the other things." Such inquisitiveness is necessary. We have to start at a very primitive level. At the beginning, inquisitiveness of this kind is absolutely needed. We think, "I wonder what it would be like to have a spiritual friend. It seems it's quite exciting. I'm going to go up to Vermont to see the guru. I'm going to pack my bag and go. It's so exciting." But then we are here and the truth of the matter begins to dawn on us. When we get back, people might ask us, "What did you get out of that? Did you learn anything? Are you enlightened now?"

Well . . . perhaps we should have our discussion.

Student: It seems that meditation is a means for us to recognize habits and deal with them. Is that correct?

Trungpa Rinpoche: What do you mean by "deal with"?

S: Acknowledge them.

TR: Yes, that's right.

S: Is our entire samsaric mind just habits?

TR: Habits cannot exist without a reference point, the reference point being duality: if that [anything] exists, then I exist; if I exist, then that exists. That's where the basic split begins to happen.

S: Can you describe how shamatha and vipashyana relate to habit?

TR: Habit comes from habit. You are told how to do meditation, and then you develop some new habits. But some new style develops, obviously, and those new habits are not so habit-oriented. In fact, it's very difficult to make meditation into a habit. Even though you've been doing it for twenty years, still there's constantly a certain sense of struggle involved. This shows that meditation is different from the rest of habitual things. It requires some kind of challenge, constantly.

Student: The loneliness you've described is really nothing more than the root of the tree you were talking about earlier, except viewed from a slightly different perspective, right?

Trungpa Rinpoche: What do you mean by "nothing more than"?

S: Nothing really is, and so nothing can really be more, can it?

TR: That's right, yes.

S: So loneliness and the root of the tree are describing the same thing.

TR: Yes. I think as you go along, the rug is pulled out from under your feet. So there are different stages of that.

S: But the thing that occurred to me that is kind of cute is that there's no condition under which the root of the tree isn't, which means that everything is the path. Okay?

TR: Yes.

S: If the root of the tree equals loneliness and loneliness equals the path, then you can't really fall off, right?

TR: That's right. And you see, that then gives the understanding that once you are on the path, you can't shake it off, so to speak. It becomes part of you, all the time, whether you like it or not. Once you begin to join in, you can't undo it, because you can't undo your basic being.

S: Thank you.

TR: So there's no need to look for security.

S: It's not there. I mean, there's no security anyway.

TR: It's not there, right. That's right. That's a good one.

Student: My connection with the word *loneliness* has to do with different emotional states like sadness and all that sort of thing. It seems that you're talking about something different, but if so, I don't understand it.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Maybe it is an emotional state of some kind, but not in the sense of the highlight when your emotion reaches its peak. Rather, it's a self-existing situation. Whenever there is uncertainty and threat, there is loneliness, which is the fear of no companionship and the fear that nobody understands you—which is very simple. At the same time, it's a fear that you might possibly not exist, that there's nothing to work on, nothing to work with. We might even go so far as to say that it's a sense of total nonexistence or total deprivation. A feeling that whatever direction you face, you're facing the world rather than the path. Things are being pushed back on you. It's some subtle state of wretchedness. I mean, it's a heavy one. It's a very total wretchedness, all-pervasive. It's not just one-directional, such as "Because he treated me badly, therefore I feel lonelier, and I'm sobbing." It's not just him alone, but it's the whole orchestra that is not playing your music.

Student: To go back to the idea of not being able to fall off the path, it seems to me—and you've written this too—that it is possible to get sidetracked. Even more so the further along you are on the path. So in a sense you can fall off the path, even for a long time.

Trungpa Rinpoche: You could, I think, if you are distracted unconsciously, without the help of meditative awareness. On the other hand, if you are very deliberately, very consciously trying to give up the path, you can't. Therefore, there is a need for constant awareness practice. It's a way of checking, so to speak. Not checking up for the purposes of security, but just to be there. And if you get fed up with that and decide to give it up, you can't do it. But it's true, you can get caught by sidetracks that come as a product of unawareness. That's why, you know, everything has been thought out about the path. That's why meditation is prescribed, why mindfulness and awareness are prescribed. So awareness is a way to keep straight on the path.

S: So you keep coming back to your original practice.

TR: Yes, but not in order to be a good boy or anything like that. Just to be yourself properly.

Student: I'd like to ask a question about loneliness and love. In my experience, the kind of love where two people try to be together in order

to protect themselves from loneliness hasn't worked out too well. When you come in contact with the loneliness, it seems to destroy a lot of things you try to pull off in trying to build up security. But can there be love between two people while they continue to try to work with the loneliness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's an interesting question. I don't think anybody can fall in love unless they feel lonely. People can't fall in love unless they know they are lonely and are separate individuals. If by some strange misunderstanding, you think you are the other person already, then there's no one for you to fall in love with. It doesn't work that way. The whole idea of union is that of two being together. One and one together make union. If there's just one, you can't call that union. Zero is not union, one is not union, but two is union. So I think in love it is the desolateness that inspires the warmth. The more you feel a sense of desolation, the more warmth you feel at the same time. You can't feel the warmth of a house unless it's cold outside. The colder it is outside, the cozier it is at home.

S: What would be the difference between the relationship between lovers and the general relationship you have with the sangha as a whole, which is a whole bunch of people feeling desolateness to different degrees?

TR: The two people have a similarity in their type of loneliness. One particular person reminds another more of his or her own loneliness. You feel that your partner, in seeing you, feels more lonely. Whereas with the sangha, it's more a matter of equal shares. There's all-pervasive loneliness, ubiquitous loneliness, happening all over the place.

Student: Would you say that loneliness is love?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think we could say that.

Student: You've indicated that as we got into this loneliness, there would be a lot of wretchedness as well. Now I'm wondering how compassion fits into this picture. How does one practice compassion with that loneliness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think loneliness brings a sense of compassion automatically. According to the Buddhist scriptures, compassion consists of shunyata, nothingness, and knowledge, prajna. So that means the ingredients of compassion are the experience of non-ego and a sense of

precision, which is often also called skillful means. You can't have compassion unless you have egolessness and the sense of precision at the same time. The sense of egolessness, obviously, comes with loneliness. And the sense of precision is seeing the wretchedness and at the same time seeing through oneself, so that everything's been examined and looked at. That becomes compassion. That's unconditional love, unconditional loneliness. Then even after you've reached that point, the loneliness principle goes on. But then you are not lonely anymore; it becomes aloneness as opposed to loneliness, which brings a sense of space.

Student: You have talked a lot about boredom in meditation. You even said somewhere that if you were not bored, you were stupid, or like a cow. And now you've just said that even after twenty years, meditation would always be a challenge. I'm having trouble following what you mean by boredom. Is the boredom a kind of touch-and-go thing where sometimes you're bored and when you're bored it causes you to act; and then you act for a while and get bored again? Or are you talking about a continual boredom?

Trungpa Rinpoche: We are talking about a continual boredom.

S: Then what about the challenge that keeps coming up?

TR: Boredom has different textures. Sometimes it's a challenge, but it's just a challenge rather than anything extraordinary. It's not a challenge in the sense of having a vision or a mystical experience in which an actual demon comes and tries to attack you. We are not talking about those kinds of challenges. We are talking about a very ordinary challenge, a very boring challenge. But still you have to do something about it. It's like if you swallow a bug in your soup. It's a challenge afterward. But it's not extraordinary that there's a bug in your soup. You've known bugs for a long time. You've known soup for a long time. Those are very boring things. But the combination of the two makes interesting boredom.

S: Maybe it's the word *boredom* itself I don't understand. Is that interesting boredom the same as, for example, if you're working on a building or a piece of sculpture every day for six months, every morning there's something—there's a bug. But if you look at it from a larger perspective, it's just the same boring challenge every day.

TR: Yes, yes.

S: So in other words, at the same nine-to-five job, you could either get fat and stupid, or you could look around.

TR: I think so. I mean we can't carve something extraordinary out of boredom. And we'd better not do that.

S: So then the problem is perhaps just not seeing that as boredom. Which means that you're not looking.

TR: That's right. Yes.

Student: You're recommending that everyone should find a teacher for themselves who they could have a relationship with. How do you go about identifying a person who could be a good teacher?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Finding a good teacher is not like buying a good horse. It's a question of relationship. If the teacher actually speaks in your style, connects with your approach, if what he says has some bearing on your own state of mind, if he understands your type of mentality, then he is a worthwhile teacher. If you can't understand what the teacher has to say, that's a lot of hassle at the beginning. Then, after he's said it, you have to try to interpret, and there's a lot of room for misunderstanding. So there should be a sense of the teacher's clarity and some kind of link between you and that teacher. The type of mentality and the type of style have to be synchronized.

S: But also the teacher has to have something else. I mean, you could have good communication with a member of the sangha, maybe, but you're both in the same boat. Whereas the teacher has to have something more to give.

TR: Yes, the teacher has to be a leader in some sense. Otherwise, he couldn't keep up with the sangha. The sangha would get to be over the teacher's head. The teacher would go down and down. Obviously, yes. But at the same time the teacher should be a traveler too, someone who is traveling with you. That's very important. Rather than being stuck with enlightenment and unable to go beyond it.

Student: Back on the question of loneliness, are you saying that one sees one's loneliness in someone else? And if you're saying that, does that lead to the conclusion that one can never find release from loneliness in being with anyone else?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's right. And loneliness can stretch as high as to enlightenment, which is a greater loneliness. Hopeless, eh?

S: Just a drag.

TR: Maybe a transcendental drag, actually.

SEVEN

Creating a Little Gap

UNFORTUNATELY, for lack of time, we haven't had a chance to go into the subject of vipashyana in great detail. But I think you must have some idea of the approach that should be taken. At this moment, I would like to place further emphasis on the idea of postmeditation awareness. That seems to be the heart of Buddhist meditation practice, along with the actual sitting practice.

If you have any sense of openness to the practice of meditation, the important point is to commit yourself to the practice. This brings a sense of reality, that the practice is no longer a myth. It's a real experience. And having become a part of your lifestyle, the practice could be utilized as a reminder, a way of taking a look at your heavy-handed thoughts, which are known as emotions. A complete new world, an old new world, of meditative life could be established.

There is so much joy that goes with that. This is not frivolous joy, but a sense of being connected with the earth. Finally, you are no longer kidding anybody, including yourself. There is something here that is very basic, that is founded on very solid ground. There is real discipline taking place, and you don't have to depend on hocus-pocus anymore as comic relief or a way to cheer up. I think that this particular experience could be said to be the beginning of basic sanity, which begins to dawn on us. Now your life contains discipline, and discipline reminds you of awareness, and awareness also reminds you of discipline. So an ongoing process is developed.

With the help of a teacher, with the help of fellow sangha members,

and with the help of the examples of lineage holders, life becomes a very full one—completely full but at the same time very spacious.

The basic notion there is that once you have developed a sense of awareness, a glimpse of awareness, that glimpse of awareness cuts through the karmic chain reactions that reproduce karmic debts, because it creates a little gap that sets chaos to the karmic chain reactions' productivity. So the karmic chain reactions are cut, and that slows down further reproduction of ego-centered karma. So the basic logic is that awareness practice is the way we can stop or transmute samsara.

One can't stop samsara immediately, because samsara is at the same time the inspiration for freedom. Without samsaric experience, we are unable to reach this level of working toward freedom, and because of samsara's hang-ups, we are able to do so. So there is no particular regret about samsara.

Still we have to realize that the practice of awareness does not represent the ultimate hope or the ultimate salvation in the evangelical sense. But it is real, and a very honest and earnest step we are taking in committing ourselves to the practice of meditation. It's not particularly colorful. It's something that everybody on the spiritual path does, and everybody does it relatively accurately. Otherwise they wouldn't be on the spiritual path. At the same time, it contains a lot of sophistication. A lot of training toward prajna, or transcendental knowledge, takes place through it. An educational process takes place. We begin to learn how to look at things, how to look everywhere, anywhere, with a certain reference point that is other than the reference point of duality. We are able to see things very clearly, very precisely, and maybe there is a tinge of joy—which is not necessarily an extraordinarily happy one. It's not particularly pleasurable, but there is a sense of joy, a sense of lightness, and at the same time a sense of fullness that takes place constantly.

Having said too much about that, I think perhaps we should have a short discussion, and then we should close our seminar.

Student: All through this seminar you've been talking about boredom. Now you talk about joy. Can one experience boredom and joy together?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Making friends with the boredom is the joy. We are not talking about two different subjects or trying to run the hot tap and then the cold tap and put the two together into some great happy medium. We are saying that boredom *is* openness and joy is also openness.

Student: Yesterday we were talking about love and relationships. In terms of Buddhism, what is the validity of having a relationship with one person if falling in love just comes from loneliness? Is the validity of such a relationship just another illusion?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, illusion is not supposed to be looked down upon. In any case, everything's illusion, so you can't say this is *just* an illusion, therefore it does not have enough worth. When you have a very close personal relationship with a person such as your mate, your husband or wife, that person becomes the spokesman for the rest of the sangha. When you live with somebody long enough, there is intense irritation and intense warmth. Often you regard each other as being very cute and sweet, but sometimes as a living devil or devilette. There are a lot of unexplored areas of experience, and you only get to use your microscope with your own mate. With others there's no time to use it. Nobody else will sit there and let themselves be scrutinized and take the trouble to scrutinize you. Only your mate will put up with that, which is a very generous thing, fantastic. So in that way, your mate becomes a spokesman for the rest of the world. That seems to be a very important part of one's life. You can't just shake it off or take it lightly.

Student: You talked a lot about a commitment to meditation, and I couldn't help connecting that with something I have heard of called the refuge vow, which I understand is part of the Buddhist tradition. Could you say something about that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Very simply, the idea of the refuge vow is becoming a Buddhist. This entails ignoring sidetracks. From the point of taking the vow onward, you take a straight and narrow path. You are no longer fascinated by sidetracks, so your shopping trip is over. You no longer shop around for something else.

Of course this is very much related to the practice of meditation. You might ask, "How is it possible to really connect with the practice of meditation? What positive move could I make to get into that situation?" It is making this commitment to give up shopping for something else. This is not like committing yourself to the church or the pope or the bishop. Rather, you make a commitment to yourself that you are going to work on yourself through the practice of meditation. That is actually necessary. And as I have already said, there is a need for a definite date, a definite occasion like a birthday celebration. You do need a certain time

and space, so people can come and watch you taking the vow in a ceremony conducted by your preceptor. It is saying that from today onward, from this very hour on, you are going to be a meditator. That is the point.

In the long run, I think it is very important and necessary for people to do that. But in the short run, I wouldn't recommend to people just to jump in, not until they know what they are doing. They should have a self-existing commitment already evolved in themselves before they take such a vow—which is dangerous. Once you have done it, you are stuck there. You can't undo it. It is very claustrophobic, and no one can save you from it. You can't untake the refuge vow. That is unknown. But when a person is involved in working with himself or herself, then at that point, there is a need for taking the refuge vow. But taking the refuge vow is not like going on welfare and getting free service. You become a refugee, you become homeless. You don't have any home ground. You are stateless, you don't have a passport anymore. You're stuck with the area where you are. You have become a refugee and you can't travel around with your passport anymore. The basic point is cutting down speed and neurotic playfulness.

Student: I thought being a refugee meant going to another country to take shelter.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Not necessarily, not in this case. Here being a refugee means you lost your country.

S: So you take refuge in yourself?

TR: You take refuge in the Buddha as example, the dharma as path, and the sangha as companionship. In other words, you take refuge in how other refugees carried out their refugeeship.

S: And no land?

TR: No-man's-land. You don't have to pay tax.

Student: How do you know if you're meditating correctly or not, apart from the fact that you get bored?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think you know that it's not particularly a metaphysical situation. It's a real situation. You have experience. There's a constant awareness continuing, rather than that you meditate in the verbal sense. But if you sit for two hours and you are only there twice for one second, then something must be wrong there. You can tell there's

something wrong if the rest of the time you were completely gone. You are not there. It's very simple.

S: When you say you're gone, what's the difference between that and sitting there and your thoughts going other places?

TR: If you are aware of your thoughts, there's no problem. Whereas if you are fantasizing a complete journey, to the point of packing your suitcase, buying an airplane ticket, and flying off to India, if you work out what places to visit, what stuff to buy, what gurus to visit, then come back, arrive at the airport in your country, your people greet you at the airport, and then the meditation gong rings ending the session—then there's some problem there.

S: So the difference would maybe be that if you did that trip but came back and said, "Oh, I just did that trip," then that's meditating?

TR: Meditating here is a very definite thing—it's being aware, meditating with what's happening. It's the developing-awareness thing we've been talking about for the past few days.

Student: I heard you once said that being in nowness was not necessarily being aware of the present thoughts, the discursive thoughts, that that wasn't essentially being in nowness. In meditating, if you're aware of the discursive thoughts that are going on—

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's just awareness.

S: But that's not necessarily being aware of nowness?

TR: No, which is impossible to do. So we do our best. Nowness-like is awareness.

Well, we have to close our seminar now. I would like to request you to continue to pay heed to what we have discussed and try to do something about it, do something about your meditation practice. A lot of you sat and practiced, and hopefully you will be able to continue that way, to give the practice a certain amount of time in your life. This will help you a great deal. And also then the time and energy that we put in here will not be wasted. Then this property of ours will not have served for the further reinforcement of karmic debts but as a cause to free people from their karma. So I hope you'll be able to work harder on your practice. Please, please, please do so. It is very important. It may seem that we have a lot of time to get around to things, but at the same time it is very urgent. Neurosis is constantly creeping in. A lot of people are

being put into painful situations by that insanity. So we have a lot of responsibilities. You should consider relating to your friends, your parents, and your key people, whoever you are associated with. It's up to you whether you are going to relate to them in terms of bringing down a samsaric mess on them or trying to give some help. This doesn't mean to say that you should convert everybody to Buddhism. You have to behave yourself first. And in order to do that, you need to do lots of practice, lots of sitting meditation. There is a chain reaction that takes place. You personally hold a very important place in your universe. Thank you.

Notes

1. The implication is that since the technique remains with the natural simplicity of what we are doing already anyway instead of being a clever or innovative departure, there is very little provocation for turning our meditation into a goal-oriented project. Even the attention to the breath, the most deliberate aspect of the technique, cannot be turned into a "big deal," since it is to receive only a light, 25 percent touch.

Spiritual materialism refers to the approach of trying to use spiritual techniques to achieve the goals of ego, such as becoming calmer, more efficient, more magnetic, or simply happier. This attitude toward spirituality, always widespread, was particularly rampant in the "spiritual supermarket" days of the 1970s, when these talks were given. A major feature of Trungpa Rinpoche's early teaching was a thoroughgoing critique of this attitude, and his first major book was called *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*. He sought to show that the true approach to meditation, and spirituality in general, was continuously surrendering the reference point of ego rather than finding ways to fortify it.

2. *Lhak-thong* literally means "superior seeing," which is taken to mean seeing clearly. It is the Tibetan term for the form of meditation, common to nearly all traditions of Buddhism, known as vipassana in Pali and vipashyana in Sanskrit. This is the principal subject of the second seminar in this book. Here Trungpa Rinpoche translates this term as "awareness." Usually, however, he translates this term as "insight," and thus refers to vipashyana as "insight meditation." Nonetheless, he regularly refers to the primary experience of vipashyana practice as awareness, contrasting it with mindfulness, the focus of shamatha practice.

3. Mahayanists might prefer to argue from the principle of shunyata, nothingness, which teaches that all things are devoid of an essence. Thus the self, too, they would say, is devoid of an essence: There is no ego to

which one can cling. But the direct experiential logic presented here is more suited to the simplicity of hinayana, and coincidentally very well represents the vajrayana approach to egolessness as well.

4. These are described in detail in Chögyam Trungpa, *The Heart of the Buddha* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1991), pp. 21–58. See Volume Three of *The Collected Works.*

5. One of Trungpa Rinpoche's frequent descriptions of the process that goes on in the first stages of meditation is "making friends with oneself." An account of this is found in Part Two of this book, chapter 2, "Recollecting the Present."

6. "Akashic records" is a semijocular allusion to a notion popularized by the Theosophical movement. Trungpa Rinpoche apparently makes use of this term, familiar to many people in his audience, in order to avoid having to get into a technical explanation of his own at this point.

The idea is that the record of one's good and bad deeds, one's karma, is kept in some transcendental realm (*akasha* is Sanskrit for "space") and continues to affect one throughout subsequent lifetimes. The Buddhist notion corresponding to some extent to this is the so-called storehouse of consciousness (Skt. *alayavijnana*), where past actions leave imprints or memories. These karmic imprints produce a tendency in the future toward repetition of actions similar to the ones that produced them. The Buddhist notion, though fulfilling a roughly equivalent function, differs significantly from the Theosophical one. It is more impersonal, since in the Buddhist view, there is no definite ego or self that transmigrates from rebirth to rebirth. Also, there is no deity or other watcher who judges the karma good or bad, other than the specious watcher trumped up by ego.

7. Here Trungpa Rinpoche is once again referring to the clumsy and painful sense of me-ness connected with the basic split, duality.

8. The heart of the Buddhist tradition is a lineage of students and teachers who receive and transmit the awakened state of mind as a living experience from one generation to the next.

Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness

Edited by Judith L. Lief



Acknowledgments

Work on this book began many years ago and involved the efforts of many people. Members of the Nālandā Translation Committee worked closely with the Vidyadhara, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, on an initial translation of the Kadampa slogans in 1981 and a subsequent revision in 1986. Translators involved at that time included Lama Ugyen Shenpen, Sherab Chödzin, Dorje Loppön Lodrö Dorje, Robin Kornman, Larry Mermelstein, and Scott Wellenbach. In preparation for this volume, the Translation Committee carefully reviewed its work on this text again, which resulted in some further revisions included here. Committee members involved with this latest revision include Lama Ugyen Shenpen, Jules Levinson, Larry Mermelstein, Mark Nowakowski, John Rockwell, and Scott Wellenbach. At the same time, a translation was prepared of "Forty-six Ways in Which a Bodhisattva Fails."

Sarah Coleman of the Vajradhatu Editorial Department worked on the original manuscript and was also present at the initial translation meetings with the Vidyadhara. She later held a series of meetings with the Vidyadhara to clarify and refine the commentary. Tingdzin Ötro of Gampo Abbey did a fastidious job of compiling on computer the Vidyadhara's teaching on the practice of the Kadampa slogans, which was scattered throughout many years of Vajradhatu Seminary Transcripts. In addition, the recording, transcribing, and preservation of Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings have taken the work of countless Vajradhatu Archive volunteers, to whom I am most grateful.

Ken McLeod's pioneering translation of Jamgön Kongtrül's commentary on mind training, given him by Venerable Kalu Rinpoche and first

published in 1974, *The Great Path of Awakening* (Shambhala, 1987), has been a continuing resource for students and of great help in the preparation of this manuscript.

I would like to thank Mrs. Diana Mukpo, who has provided ongoing support for the Dharma Ocean Series and given her permission and encouragement to publish these teachings.

Most especially, I would like to thank the Vidyadhara, Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, who showed us a pragmatic way of cultivating kindness and who was persistent in encouraging us to make these teachings available for the benefit of beings in these difficult times.

JUDITH L. LIEF

Editor's Foreword

THIS BOOK IS A translation by the Nālandā Translation Committee of *The Root Text of the Seven Points of Training the Mind* by Chekawa Yeshe Dorje, with a commentary based on oral teachings presented by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. In his teaching on this subject, Trungpa Rinpoche utilized as a central reference the commentary by Jamgön Kongtrül the Great, titled in Tibetan *Changchup Shunglam* (The Basic Path toward Enlightenment), which was included in the collection of the principal teachings of Tibetan Buddhism that the latter compiled, known as *The Five Treasuries*. (Trungpa Rinpoche's own teacher, Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen, was an incarnation of this leading nineteenth-century teacher.)

The seven points of mind training are attributed to the great Indian Buddhist teacher Atisha Dipankara Shrijnana, who was born of royal heritage in Bengal in 982 C.E. Thus, the list of mind training slogans compiled by Chekawa is often referred to as the Atisha slogans. Having renounced palace life as a teenager, Atisha studied and practiced extensively in India and later in Sumatra, with his principal teacher, Dharmakirti (also known as Serlingpa in Tibetan), from whom he received the instructions on bodhichitta and mind training. Upon his return to India, he began to reestablish these once-lost teachings and took a post at Vikramashila, a famous Buddhist monastic university. Invited to bring the teachings on mind training to Tibet, he taught there for about thirteen years, until his death in approximately 1054, having transmitted this body of wisdom to his closest Tibetan disciple, Dromtönpa, the founder of the Kadam lineage of Tibetan Buddhism.[1]

For some time, the Atisha slogans were kept secret and transmitted

only to close disciples. The first to write them down was the Kadampa teacher Lang-ri Thangpa (1054–1123). They became more widely known after they were summarized by Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (1101–1175) in *The Root Text of the Seven Points of Training the Mind*. Geshe Chekawa encountered many lepers in the course of his teaching and instructed them in mind training. It is said that several of them were thereby cured of their disease. His teachings were thus sometimes referred to by the Tibetans as "the dharma for leprosy." When Chekawa noticed that these teachings even seemed to benefit his unruly brother, who had no interest in the dharma, he decided that it would be appropriate to make them more widely available. Atisha's teachings on mind training are thus now practiced by all the major lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, and have been for centuries.[2]

The Root Text of the Seven Points of Training the Mind is a list of fifty-nine slogans, which form a pithy summary instruction on the view and practical application of mahayana Buddhism. The study and practice of these slogans is a very practical and earthy way of reversing our ego-clinging and of cultivating tenderness and compassion. They provide a method of training our minds through both formal meditation practice and using the events of everyday life as a means of awakening.

This volume is not based on a single seminar, as are many other books in the Dharma Ocean Series, but rather is a compilation of teachings and remarks given over a period of years. The Vidyadhara[3] first presented the mahayana teachings of the Kadampa slogans in 1975, at the third annual Vajradhatu[4] Seminary, one of thirteen three-month advanced teaching programs he taught between 1973 and 1986. In subsequent seminaries he further elaborated upon the theory and practice of mind training.

Mind training, or slogan practice, has two aspects: meditation and postmeditation practice. In Tibetan, the meditation practice is called *tonglen*, or sending and taking, and is based upon the seventh slogan: "Sending and taking should be practiced alternately. / These two should ride the breath." Trungpa Rinpoche introduced the formal meditation practice of tonglen to his students at the 1979 seminary and he encouraged them to incorporate tonglen into their daily meditation practice. He also encouraged them to work with the postmeditation practice of joining every aspect of their lives with meditative discipline through the application of the slogans.

In working with his own students, Trungpa Rinpoche placed great emphasis on the practice of formless meditation, the development of mindfulness and awareness, as the foundation. He initially transmitted tonglen practice only to senior students who already had extensive experience in sitting meditation and the study of Buddhist teachings. When the study and practice of mind training are presented in such a context, the danger of interpreting these teachings in a moralistic or conceptual fashion is reduced.

Later the practice of tonglen began to be introduced to students upon the occasion of taking the bodhisattva vow, a formal statement of their aspiration to dedicate their lives to the benefit of others. Over time, tonglen practice was introduced in a variety of contexts. The Naropa Institute, a Buddhist-inspired university in Boulder, Colorado, includes tonglen training in its clinical psychology program. This training has also been offered as an aspect of the Buddhist-Christian dialogues offered at the Naropa Institute. Participants in one-month-long meditation intensives, called dathüns in Tibetan, are now regularly introduced to tonglen practice, and if they desire more intensive training, they may take part in specialized tonglen dathüns. Tonglen is included in a monthly practice for the sick as well as in Vajradhatu funeral ceremonies.

Through slogan practice, we begin to realize that our habitual tendency, even in our smallest gestures, is one of self-centeredness. That tendency is quite entrenched and affects all of our activities, even our so-called benevolent behavior. The practice of tonglen is a direct reversal of such a habit pattern and is based on the practice of putting others before self. Starting with our friends, and then extending to our acquaintances and eventually even our enemies, we expand our field of awareness to accept others and be of benefit to them. We do this not because we are martyrs or have suppressed our self-concern, but because we have begun to accept ourselves and our world. Slogan practice opens up a greater field of tenderness and strength, so that our actions are based on appreciation rather than the ongoing cycle of hope and fear.

Coming face-to-face with this most basic contrast of altruism and self-centeredness takes considerable courage and daring. It gets right to the heart of the spiritual path and allows no room for even the slightest deception or holding back. It is a very basic, nitty-gritty practice.

Tonglen is a particularly powerful way of dealing with pain and loss. In relating to illness or death—our own or another's—tonglen helps us

overcome our struggle with and rejection of such experiences and relate more simply and directly.

The formal practice of tonglen, like mindfulness-awareness practice, works with the medium of the breath. In order to begin, it is essential first to ground oneself by means of mindfulness and awareness training. That is the foundation upon which tonglen is based. Tonglen practice itself has three stages. To begin with, you rest your mind briefly, for a second or two, in a state of openness. This stage is somewhat abrupt and has a quality of "flashing" on basic stillness and clarity. Next, you work with texture. You breathe in a feeling of heat, darkness, and heaviness, a sense of claustrophobia, and you breathe out a feeling of coolness, brightness, and lightness—a sense of freshness. You feel these qualities going in and out, through all your pores. Having established the general feeling or tone of tonglen, you begin to work with mental contents. Whatever arises in your experience, you simply breathe in what is not desirable and breathe out what is desirable. Starting with your immediate experience, you expand that to include people around you and other sentient beings who are suffering in the same way as you. For instance, if you are feeling inadequate, you begin by breathing that in and breathing out your personal sense of competence and adequacy. Then you extend the practice, broadening it beyond your personal concerns to connect with the poignancy of those feelings in your immediate surroundings and throughout the world. The essential quality of this practice is one of opening your heart—wholeheartedly taking in and wholeheartedly letting go. In tonglen nothing is rejected: whatever arises is further fuel for the practice.

Trungpa Rinpoche stressed the importance of the oral tradition, in which practices are transmitted personally and directly from teacher to student. In that way students participate directly in an unbroken wisdom tradition, going back many generations to the time of the Buddha himself. The essential living quality of practice being conveyed is a very human one and cannot be acquired simply from books. Therefore, it is recommended that before embarking on the formal practice of sending and taking, if at all possible, one should meet with an experienced practitioner to discuss the practice and receive formal instruction.

The postmeditation practice is based upon the spontaneous recall of appropriate slogans in the thick of daily life. Rather than making a heavy-handed or deliberate effort to guide your actions in accordance

with the slogans, a quality of spontaneous reminder is evoked through the study of these traditional aphorisms. If you study these seven points of mind training and memorize the slogans, you will find that they arise effortlessly in your mind at the oddest times. They have a haunting quality, and in their recurrence they can lead you gradually to a more and more subtle understanding of the nature of kindness and compassion.

The slogans have a way of continually turning in on themselves, so that any attempt to rely on these sayings as crutches to support a particular moral view is undermined. The approach to moral action here is one of removing obstacles of limited vision, fear and self-clinging, so that one's actions are not burdened by the weight of self-concern, projections, and expectations. The slogans are meant to be "practiced." That is, they need to be studied and memorized. At the same time, they need to be "let go." They are merely conceptual tools pointing to nonconceptual realization.

As is usual in Buddhist teachings, there is an element of playfulness and irony in the way one slogan often undermines its predecessor and thereby enlarges one's view. They form a loop in which nothing is excluded. Whatever arises in one's mind or experience is let go into the greater space of awareness that slogan practice generates. It is this openness of mind that becomes the basis for the cultivation of compassion.

The view of morality presented through the Kadampa slogans is similar to that of Shakespeare's famous lines, "The quality of mercy is not strained, it falleth as the gentle rain from heaven." There is no notion of moral battlefield in which we ward off evil and fight for the right. The traditional Buddhist image for compassion is that of the sun, which shines beneficently and equally on all. It is the sun's nature to shine; there is no struggle. Likewise, compassion is a natural human activity, once the veils and obstacles to its expression are removed.

The Vidyadhara encouraged his students to include tonglen in their daily meditation practice and to memorize the slogans. He would have individual slogans beautifully calligraphed and posted at Vajradhatu seminaries. You never knew when you might come across one. For instance, you might find "Be grateful to everyone" posted in the kitchen or "Drive all blames into one" hanging from a tree. The slogans are meant to be contemplated—one by one. For that reason the Vidyadhara

encouraged students to use printed slogan cards as daily reminders and provocateurs.*

In their earthiness and simplicity, may these teachings inspire us to cultivate kindness and compassion, and not to give up on ourselves or others. May they provoke fearlessness in overcoming the tenacious grip of ego. May they enable us to put into practice our most heartfelt aspirations to benefit all sentient beings on the path of awakening.

*See p. xiii for information on obtaining slogan cards.

Introduction

IN THE MAHAYANA tradition[1] we experience a sense of gentleness toward ourselves, and a sense of friendliness to others begins to arise. That friendliness or compassion is known in Tibetan as *nyingje*, which literally means "noble heart." We are willing to commit ourselves to working with all sentient beings. But before we actually launch into that project, we first need a lot of training.

The obstacle to becoming a mahayanist is not having enough sympathy for others and for oneself—that is the basic point. And that problem can be dealt with by practical training, which is known as lojong practice, "training the mind." That training gives us a path, a way to work with our crude and literal and raw and rugged styles, a way to become good mahayanists. Ignorant or stupid students of the mahayana sometimes think that they have to glorify themselves; they want to become leaders or guides. We have a technique or practice for overcoming that problem. That practice is the development of humility, which is connected with training the mind.

The basic mahayana vision is to work for the benefit of others and create a situation that will benefit others. Therefore, you take the attitude that you are willing to dedicate yourself to others. When you take that attitude, you begin to realize that others are more important than yourself. Because of that vision of mahayana, because you adopt that attitude, and because you actually find that others are more important—with all three of those together, you develop the mahayana practice of training the mind.

Hinayana discipline is fundamentally one of *taming* the mind. By working with the various forms of unmindfulness, we begin to become

thorough and precise, and our discipline becomes good. When we are thoroughly tamed by the practice of shamatha discipline, or mindfulness practice, as well as trained by vipashyana, or awareness, in how to hear the teachings, we begin to develop a complete understanding of the dharma. After that, we also begin to develop a complete understanding of how, in our particular state of being tamed, we can relate with others.

In the mahayana we talk more in terms of *training* the mind. That is the next step. The mind is already tamed, therefore it can be trained. In other words, we have been able to domesticate our mind by practicing hinayana discipline according to the principles of the buddhadharma. Having domesticated our mind, then we can use it further. It's like the story of capturing a wild cow in the old days. Having captured the wild cow, having domesticated it, you find that the cow becomes completely willing to relate with its tamers. In fact, the cow likes being domesticated. So at this point the cow is part of our household. Once upon a time it wasn't that way—I'm sure cows were wild and ferocious before we domesticated them.

Training the mind is known as lojong in Tibetan: *lo* means "intelligence," "mind," "that which can perceive things"; *jong* means "training" or "processing." The teachings of lojong consist of several steps or points of mahayana discipline. The basic discipline of mind training or lojong is a sevenfold cleaning or processing of one's mind.

This book is based on the basic Kadampa text, *The Root Text of the Seven Points of Training the Mind,* and on the commentary by Jamgön Kongtrül. In Tibetan the commentary is called *Changchup Shunglam. Shung* is the word used for "government" and also for "main body." So *shung* means "main governing body." For instance, we could call the Tibetan government *pö shung—pö* meaning "Tibet," *shung* meaning "government." The government that is supposed to run a country is a wide administration rather than a narrow administration: it takes care of the psychology of the country, the economics, politics, and domestic situations. *Shung* is actually the working basis, the main working stream. *Lam* means "path." So shunglam is a general highway, so to speak, a basic process of working toward enlightenment. In other words, it is the mahayana approach. It is the highway that everybody goes on, a wide way, extraordinarily wide and extraordinarily open. *Changchup* means "enlightenment," *shung* means "wide" or "basic," and *lam*

means "path." So the title of the commentary is *The Basic Path Toward Enlightenment.*

The main text is based on Atisha's teachings on lojong and comes from the Kadam school of Tibetan Buddhism, which developed around the time of Marpa and Milarepa, when Tibetan monasticism had begun to take place and become deep-rooted. The Kagyüpas received these instructions on the proper practice of mahayana Buddhism through Gampopa, who studied with Milarepa as well as with Kadam teachers. There is what is known as the contemplative Kadam school and the intellectual Kadam school. What we are doing here is related to the Kadam school's contemplative tradition. The Gelukpas specialized in dialectics and took a more philosophical approach to understanding the Kadam tradition.

The word *kadam* has an interesting meaning for us. *Ka* means "command," as when a general gives a pep talk to his or her troops or a king gives a command to his ministers. Or we could say "Logos," or "Word," as in the Christian tradition: "In the beginning was the Word." That kind of Word is a fundamental sacred command, the first that was uttered at all! In this case, *ka* refers to a sense of absolute truth and a sense of practicality or workability from the individual's point of view. *Dam* is "oral teaching," "personal teaching," that is, a manual on how to handle our life properly. So *ka* and *dam* mixed together means that all the *ka,* all the commands or messages, are regarded as practical and workable oral teachings. They are regarded as a practical working basis for students who are involved with contemplative and meditative disciplines. That is the basic meaning of *kadam.*

The few lists presented here are very simple ones, nothing particularly philosophical. It is purely what one of the great Kagyü teachers regarded as a "grandmother's finger-point." When a grandmother says, "This is the place where I used to go and pick corn, collect wild vegetables," she usually uses her finger rather than writing on paper or using a map. So it is a grandmother's approach at this point.

In my own case, having studied philosophy a lot, the first time Jamgön Kongtrül suggested that I read and study this book, *Changchup Shunglam,* I was relieved that Buddhism was so simple and that you could actually do something about it. You can actually practice. You can just follow the book and do as it says, which is extraordinarily powerful and such a relief. And that sense of simplicity still continues. It is so precious and so direct. I do not know what kind of words to use to describe it. It

is somewhat rugged, but at the same time it is so soothing to read such writing. That is one of the characteristics of Jamgön Kongtrül—he can change his tone completely, as if he were a different author altogether. Whenever he writes on a particular subject, he changes his approach accordingly, and his basic awareness to relate with the audience becomes entirely different.

Jamgön Kongtrül's commentary on the Kadampa slogans is one of the best books I studied in the early stages of my monastic kick. I was going to become a simple little monk. I was going to study these things and become a good little Buddhist and a contemplative-type person. Such a thread still holds throughout my life. In spite of complications in my life and organizational problems, I still feel that I am basically a simple, romantic Buddhist who has immense feeling toward the teachers and the teaching.

What has been said is a drop of golden liquid. Each time you read such a book it confirms again and again that there is something about it which makes everything very simple and direct. That makes me immensely happy. I sleep well, too. There is a hard-edged quality of cutting down preconceptions and other ego battles that might be involved in presenting the teaching. But at the same time there is always a soft spot of devotion and simplicity in mahayana Buddhism which you can never forget. That is very important. I am not particularly trying to be dramatic. If it comes through that way, it's too bad. But I really do feel extraordinarily positive about Jamgön Kongtrül and his approach to this teaching.

POINT ONE

The Preliminaries, Which Are a Basis for Dharma Practice

1

First, train in the preliminaries.

In practicing the slogans and in your daily life, you should maintain an awareness of [1] the preciousness of human life and the particular good fortune of life in an environment in which you can hear the teachings of buddhadharma; [2] the reality of death, that it comes suddenly and without warning; [3] the entrapment of karma—that whatever you do, whether virtuous or not, only further entraps you in the chain of cause and effect; and [4] the intensity and inevitability of suffering for yourself and for all sentient beings. This is called "taking an attitude of the four reminders."

With that attitude as a base, you should call upon your guru with devotion, inviting into yourself the atmosphere of sanity inspired by his or her example, and vowing to cut the roots of further ignorance and suffering. This ties in very closely with the notion of maitri, or loving-kindness. In the traditional analogy of one's spiritual path, the only pure loving object seems to be somebody who can show you the path. You could have a loving relationship with your parents, relatives, and so forth, but there are still problems with that: your neurosis goes along with it. A pure love affair can only take place with one's teacher. So that

ideal sympathetic object is used as a starting point, a way of developing a relationship beyond your own neurosis. Particularly in the mahayana, you relate to the teacher as someone who cheers you up from depression and brings you down from excitement, a kind of moderator principle. The teacher is regarded as important from that point of view.

This slogan establishes the contrast between samsara—the epitome of pain, imprisonment, and insanity—and the root guru—the embodiment of openness, freedom, and sanity—as the fundamental basis for all practice. As such, it is heavily influenced by the vajrayana tradition.

POINT TWO

The Main Practice, Which Is Training in Bodhichitta

Ultimate and Relative Bodhichitta

Ultimate Bodhichitta and the Paramita of Generosity

The ultimate or absolute bodhichitta principle is based on developing the paramita of generosity, which is symbolized by a wish-fulfilling jewel. The Tibetan word for generosity, *jinpa*, means "giving," "opening," or "parting." So the notion of generosity means not holding back but giving constantly. Generosity is self-existing openness, complete openness. You are no longer subject to cultivating your own scheme or project. And the best way to open yourself up is to make friends with yourself and with others.

Traditionally, there are three types of generosity. The first one is ordinary generosity, giving material goods or providing comfortable situations for others. The second one is the gift of fearlessness. You reassure others and teach them that they don't have to feel completely tormented and freaked out about their existence. You help them to see that there is basic goodness and spiritual practice, that there is a way for them to sustain their lives. That is the gift of fearlessness. The third type of generosity is the gift of dharma. You show others that there is a path that consists of discipline, meditation, and intellect or knowledge. Through all three types of generosity, you can open up other people's minds. In

that way their closedness, wretchedness, and small thinking can be turned into a larger vision.

That is the basic vision of mahayana altogether: to let people think bigger, think greater. We can afford to open ourselves and join the rest of the world with a sense of tremendous generosity, tremendous goodness, and tremendous richness. The more we give, the more we gain—although what we might gain should not particularly be our reason for giving. Rather, the more we give, the more we are inspired to give constantly. And the gaining process happens naturally, automatically, always.

The opposite of generosity is stinginess, holding back—having a poverty mentality, basically speaking. The basic principle of the ultimate bodhichitta slogans is to rest in the eighth consciousness, or alaya, and not follow our discursive thoughts. *Alaya* is a Sanskrit word meaning "basis," or sometimes "abode" or "home," as in *Himalaya*, "abode of snow." So it has that idea of a vast range. It is the fundamental state of consciousness, before it is divided into "I" and "other," or into the various emotions. It is the basic ground where things are processed, where things exist. In order to rest in the nature of alaya, you need to go beyond your poverty attitude and realize that your alaya is as good as anybody else's alaya. You have a sense of richness and self-sufficiency. You can do it, and you can afford to give out as well. And the ultimate bodhichitta slogans [slogans 2–6] are the basic points of reference through which we are going to familiarize ourselves with ultimate bodhichitta.

Ultimate bodhichitta is similar to the absolute shunyata principle. And whenever there is the absolute shunyata principle, we have to have a basic understanding of absolute compassion at the same time. *Shunyata* literally means "openness" or "emptiness." Shunyata is basically understanding nonexistence. When you begin realizing nonexistence, then you can afford to be more compassionate, more giving. A problem is that usually we would like to hold on to our territory and fixate on that particular ground. Once we begin to fixate on that ground, we have no way to give. Understanding shunyata means that we begin to realize that there is no ground to get, that we are ultimately free, nonaggressive, open. We realize that we are actually nonexistent ourselves. We are not—*no*, rather.[1] Then we can give. We have lots to gain and nothing to lose at that point. It is very basic.

Compassion is based on some sense of "soft spot" in us. It is as if we

have a pimple on our body that is very sore—so sore that we do not want to rub it or scratch it. During our shower we do not want to rub too much soap over it because it hurts. There is a sore point or soft spot which happens to be painful to rub, painful to put hot or cold water over.

That sore spot on our body is an analogy for compassion. Why? Because even in the midst of immense aggression, insensitivity in our life, or laziness, we always have a soft spot, some point we can cultivate—or at least not bruise. Every living being has that kind of basic sore spot, including animals. Whether we are crazy, dull, aggressive, ego-tripping, whatever we might be, there is still that sore spot taking place in us. An open wound, which might be a more vivid analogy, is always there. That open wound is usually very inconvenient and problematic. We don't like it. We would like to be tough. We would like to fight, to come out strong, so we do not have to defend any aspect of ourselves. We would like to attack our enemy on the spot, single-handedly. We would like to lay our trips on everybody completely and properly, so that we have nothing to hide. That way, if somebody decides to hit us back, we are not wounded. And hopefully nobody will hit us on that sore spot, that wound that exists in us. Our basic makeup, the basic constituents of our mind, are based on passion and compassion at the same time. But however confused we might be, however much of a cosmic monster we might be, still there is an open wound or sore spot in us always. There always will be a sore spot.

Sometimes people translate that sore spot or open wound as "religious conviction" or "mystical experience." But let us give that up. It has nothing to do with Buddhism, nothing to do with Christianity, and moreover, nothing to do with anything else at all. It is just an open wound, a very simple open wound. That is very nice—at least we are accessible somewhere. We are not completely covered with a suit of armor all the time. We have a sore spot somewhere, some open wound somewhere. Such a relief! Thank earth!

Because of that particular sore spot, even if we are a cosmic monster—Mussolini, Mao Tse-tung, or Hitler—we can still fall in love. We can still appreciate beauty, art, poetry, or music. The rest of us could be covered with cast-iron shields, but some sore spot always exists in us, which is fantastic. That sore spot is known as embryonic compassion,

potential compassion. At least we have some kind of gap, some discrepancy in our state of being which allows basic sanity to shine through.

Our level of sanity could be very primitive. Our sore spot could be just purely the love of tortillas or the love of curries. But that's good enough. We have some kind of opening. It doesn't matter what it is love *of* as long as there is a sore spot, an open wound. That's good. That is where all the germs could get in and begin to impregnate and take possession of us and influence our system. And that is precisely how the compassionate attitude supposedly takes place.

Not only that, but there is also an inner wound, which is called tathagatagarbha, or buddha nature. Tathagatagarbha is like a heart that is sliced and bruised by wisdom and compassion. When the external wound and the internal wound begin to meet and to communicate, then we begin to realize that our whole being is made out of one complete sore spot altogether, which is called "bodhisattva fever." That vulnerability is compassion. We really have no way to defend ourselves anymore at all. A gigantic cosmic wound is all over the place—an inner wound and an external wound at the same time. Both are sensitive to cold air, hot air, and little disturbances of atmosphere which begin to affect us both inwardly and outwardly. It is the living flame of love, if you would like to call it that. But we should be very careful what we say about love. What is love? Do we know love? It is a vague word. In this case we are not even calling it love. Nobody before puberty would have any sense of sexuality or of love affairs. Likewise, since we haven't broken through to understand what our soft spot is all about, we cannot talk about love, we can only talk about passion. It might sound too grandiose to talk about compassion. It sounds fantastic, but it actually doesn't say as much as love, which is very heavy. Compassion is a kind of passion, com-passion, which is easy to work with.

There is a slit in our skin, a wound. It's very harsh treatment, in some sense; but on the other hand, it's very gentle. The intention is gentle, but the practice is very harsh. By combining the intention and the practice, you are being "harshed," and also you are being "gentled," so to speak—both together. That makes you into a bodhisattva. You have to go through that kind of process. You have to jump into the blender. It is necessary for you to do that. Just jump into the blender and work with it. Then you will begin to feel that you are swimming in the blender. You might even enjoy it a little bit, after you have been processed. So an

actual understanding of ultimate bodhichitta only comes from compassion. In other words, a purely logical, professional, or scientific conclusion doesn't bring you to that. The five ultimate bodhichitta slogans are steps toward a compassionate approach.

A lot of you seemingly, very shockingly, are not particularly compassionate. You are not saving your grandma from drowning and you are not saving your pet dog from getting killed. Therefore, we have to go through this subject of compassion. Compassion is a very, very large subject, an extraordinarily large subject, which includes how to *be* compassionate. And actually, ultimate bodhichitta is preparation for relative bodhichitta. Before we cultivate compassion, we first need to understand how to *be* properly. How to love your grandma and how to love your flea or your mosquito—that comes later. The relative aspect of compassion comes much later. If we do not have an understanding of ultimate bodhichitta, then we do not have any understanding of the actual working basis of being compassionate and kind to somebody. We might just join the Red Cross and make nuisances of ourselves and create further garbage.

According to the mahayana tradition, we are told that we can actually arouse twofold bodhichitta: relative bodhichitta and ultimate bodhichitta. We could arouse both of them. Then, having aroused bodhichitta, we can continue further and practice according to the bodhisattva's example. We can be active bodhisattvas.

In order to arouse absolute or ultimate bodhichitta, we have to join shamatha and vipashyana together. Having developed the basic precision of shamatha and the total awareness of vipashyana, we put them together so that they cover the whole of our existence—our behavior patterns and our daily life—everything. In that way, in both meditation and postmeditation practice, mindfulness and awareness are happening simultaneously, all the time. Whether we are asleep or awake, eating or wandering, precision and awareness are taking place all the time. That is quite a delightful experience.

Beyond that delight, we also tend to develop a sense of friendliness to everything. The early level of irritation and aggression has been processed through, so to speak, by mindfulness and awareness. There is instead a notion of basic goodness, which is described in the Kadam texts as the natural virtue of alaya. This is an important point for us to understand. Alaya is the fundamental state of existence, or consciousness,

before it is divided into "I" and "other," or into the various emotions. It is the basic ground where things are processed, where things exist. And its basic state, or natural style, is goodness. It is very benevolent. There is a basic state of existence that is fundamentally good and that we can rely on. There is room to relax, room to open ourselves up. We can make friends with ourselves and with others. That is fundamental virtue or basic goodness, and it is the basis of the possibility of absolute bodhichitta.

Once we have been inspired by the precision of shamatha and the wakefulness of vipashyana, we find that there is room, which gives us the possibility of total naiveté, in the positive sense. The Tibetan for naiveté is *pak-yang*, which means "carefree" or "let loose." We can be carefree with our basic goodness. We do not have to scrutinize or investigate wholeheartedly to make sure that there are no mosquitoes or eggs inside our alaya. The basic goodness of alaya can be cultivated and connected with quite naturally and freely, in a pak-yang way. We can develop a sense of relaxation and release from torment—from this-and-that altogether.

Relative Bodhichitta and the Paramita of Discipline

That brings us to the next stage. Again, instead of remaining at a theoretical, conceptual level alone, we return to the most practical level. In the mahayana our main concern is how to awaken ourselves. We begin to realize that we are not as dangerous as we had thought. We develop some notion of kindness, or maitri, and having developed maitri we begin to switch into karuna, or compassion.

The development of relative bodhichitta is connected with the paramita of discipline. It has been said that if you don't have discipline, it is like trying to walk without any legs. You cannot attain liberation without discipline. Discipline in Tibetan is tsültrim: *tsül* means "proper," and *trim* means "discipline" or "obeying the rules," literally speaking. So *trim* could be translated as "rule" or "justice." The basic notion of tsültrim goes beyond giving alone; it means having good conduct. It also means having some sense of passionlessness and nonterritoriality. All of that is very much connected with relative bodhichitta.

Relative bodhichitta comes from the simple and basic experience of realizing that you could have a tender heart in any situation. Even the

most vicious animals have a tender heart in taking care of their young, or for that matter, in taking care of themselves. From our basic training in shamatha-vipashyana, we begin to realize our basic goodness and to let go with that. We begin to rest in the nature of alaya—not caring and being very naive and ordinary, casual, in some sense. When we let ourselves go, we begin to have a feeling of good existence in ourselves. That could be regarded as the very ordinary and trivial concept of having a good time. Nonetheless, when we have good intentions toward ourselves, it is not because we are trying to achieve anything—we are just trying to be ourselves. As they say, we could come as we are. At that point we have a natural sense that we can afford to give ourselves freedom. We can afford to relax. We can afford to treat ourselves better, trust ourselves more, and let ourselves feel good. The basic goodness of alaya is always there. It is that sense of healthiness and cheerfulness and naiveté that brings us to the realization of relative bodhichitta.

Relative bodhichitta is related to how we start to learn to love each other and ourselves. That seems to be the basic point. It's very difficult for us to learn to love. It would be possible for us to love if an object of fascination were presented to us or if there were some kind of dream or promise presented. Maybe then we could learn to love. But it is very hard for us to learn to love if it means purely giving love without expecting anything in return. It is very difficult to do that. When we decide to love somebody, we usually expect that person to fulfill our desires and conform to our hero worship. If our expectations can be fulfilled, we can fall in love, ideally. So in most of our love affairs, what usually happens is that our love is absolutely conditional. It is more of a business deal than actual love. We have no idea how to communicate a sense of warmth. When we do begin to communicate a sense of warmth to somebody, it makes us very uptight. And when our object of love tries to cheer us up, it becomes an insult.

That is a very aggression-oriented approach. In the mahayana, particularly in the contemplative tradition, love and affection are largely based on free love, open love which does not ask anything in return. It is a mutual dance. Even if during the dance you step on each other's toes, it is not regarded as problematic or an insult. We do not have to get on our high horse or be touchy about that. To learn to love, to learn to open, is one of the hardest things of all for us. Yet we are conditioned by passion all the time. Since we are in the human realm, our main focus

or characteristic is passion and lust, all the time. So what the mahayana teachings are based on is the idea of communication, openness, and being without expectations.

When we begin to realize that the nature of phenomena is free from concept, empty by itself, that the chairs and tables and rugs and curtains and walls are no longer in the way, then we can expand our notion of love infinitely. There is nothing in the way. The very purpose of discussing the nature of shunyata is to provide us that emptiness, so that we could fill the whole of space with a sense of affection—love without expectation, without demand, without possession. That is one of the most powerful things that the mahayana has to contribute.

In contrast, hinayana practitioners are very keen on the path of individual salvation, not causing harm to others. They are reasonable and good-thinking and very polite people. But how can you be really polite and keep smiling twenty-four hours a day on the basis of individual salvation alone, without doing anything for others? You are doing everything for yourself all the time, even if you are being kind and nice and polite. That's very hard to do. At the mahayana level, the sense of affection and love has a lot of room—immense room, openness, and daring. There is no time to come out clean, particularly, as long as you generate affection.

The relationship between a mother and child is the foremost analogy used in developing relative bodhichitta practice. According to the medieval Indian and Tibetan traditions, the traditional way of cultivating relative bodhichitta is to choose your mother as the first example of someone you feel soft toward. Traditionally, you feel warm and kindly toward your mother. In modern society, there might be a problem with that. However, you could go back to the medieval idea of the mother principle. You could appreciate her way of sacrificing her own comfort for you. You could remember how she used to wake up in the middle of the night if you cried, how she used to feed you and change your diapers, and all the rest of it. You could remember how you acted as the ruler in your little household, how your mother became your slave. Whenever you cried, she would jump up whether she liked it or not in order to see what was going on with you. Your mother actually did that. And when you were older, she was very concerned about your security and your education and so forth. So in order to develop relative bodhichitta, relative wakeful gentleness, we use our mother as an example, as our guid-

ing light, so to speak. We think about her and realize how much she sacrificed for us. Her kindness is the perfect example of making others more important than yourself.

Reflecting on your own mother is the preliminary to relative bodhichitta practice. You should regard that as your starting point. You might be a completely angry person and have a grudge against the entire universe. You might be a completely frustrated person. But you could still reflect back on your childhood and think of how nice your mother was to you. You could think of that in spite of your aggression and your resentment. You could remember that there was a time when somebody sacrificed her life for your life and brought you up to be the person you are now.

The idea of relative bodhichitta in this case is very primitive, in some sense. On the other hand, it is also very enlightening, as bodhichitta should be. Although you might be a completely angry person, you cannot say that in your entire life nobody helped you. Somebody has been kind to you and sacrificed himself or herself for you. Otherwise, if somebody hadn't brought you up, you wouldn't be here as an adult. You could realize that it wasn't just out of obligation but out of her genuineness that your mother brought you up and took care of you when you were helpless. And because of that you are here. That kind of compassion is very literal and very straightforward.

With that understanding, we can begin to extend our sense of nonaggression and nonfrustration and nonanger and nonresentment beyond simply appreciating our mother. This is connected with the paramita of discipline, which is free from passion and has to do with giving in. Traditionally, we use our mother as an example, and then we extend beyond that to our friends and to other people generally. Finally, we even try to feel better toward our enemies, toward people we don't like. So we try to extend that sense of gentleness, softness, and gratitude. We are not particularly talking about the Christian concept of charity, we are talking about how to make ourselves soft and reasonable. We are talking about how we can experience a sense of gratitude toward anybody at all, starting with our mother and going beyond that to include our father as well—and so forth until we include the rest of the world. So in the end we can begin to feel sympathy even toward our bedbugs and mosquitoes.

The starting point of relative bodhichitta practice is realizing that

others could actually be more important than ourselves. Other people might provide us with constant problems, but we could still be kind to them. According to the logic of relative bodhichitta, we should feel that we are less important and others are more important—*any* others are more important! Doing so, we begin to feel as though a tremendous burden has been taken off our shoulders. Finally, we realize that there is room to give love and affection elsewhere, to more than just this thing called "me" all the time. "I am this, I am that, I am hungry, I am tired, I am blah-blah-blah." We could consider others. From that point of view, the relative bodhichitta principle is quite simple and ordinary. We could take care of others. We could actually be patient enough to develop selfless service to others. And the relative bodhichitta slogans [slogans 7–10] are directions as to how to develop relative bodhichitta in a very simple manner, a grandmother's approach to reality, so to speak.

Ultimate Bodhichitta Slogans

2

Regard all dharmas as dreams.

This slogan is an expression of compassion and openness. It means that whatever you experience in your life—pain, pleasure, happiness, sadness, grossness, refinement, sophistication, crudeness, heat, cold, or whatever—is purely memory. The actual discipline or practice of the bodhisattva tradition is to regard whatever occurs as a phantom. Nothing ever happens. But because nothing happens, everything happens. When we want to be entertained, nothing seems to happen. But in this case, although everything is just a thought in your mind, a lot of underlying percolation takes place. That "nothing happening" is the experience of openness, and that percolation is the experience of compassion.

You can experience that dreamlike quality by relating with sitting meditation practice. When you are reflecting on your breath, suddenly discursive thoughts begin to arise: you begin to see things, to hear things, and to feel things. But all those perceptions are none other than your own mental creation. In the same way, you can see that your hate for

your enemy, your love for your friends, and your attitudes toward money, food, and wealth are all a part of discursive thought.

Regarding things as dreams does not mean that you become fuzzy and woolly, that everything has an edge of sleepiness about it. You might actually have a good dream, vivid and graphic. Regarding dharmas as dreams means that although you might think that things are very solid, the way you perceive them is soft and dreamlike. For instance, if you have participated in group meditation practice, your memory of your meditation cushion and the person who sat in front of you is very vivid, as is your memory of your food and the sound of the gong and the bed that you slept in. But none of those situations is regarded as completely invincible and solid and tough. Everything is shifty.

Things have a dreamlike quality. But at the same time the production of your mind is quite vivid. If you didn't have a mind, you wouldn't be able to perceive anything at all. Because you have a mind, you perceive things. Therefore, what you perceive is a product of your mind, using your sense organs as channels for the sense perceptions.

3

Examine the nature of unborn awareness.

Look at your basic mind, just simple awareness which is not divided into sections, the thinking process that exists within you. Just look at that, see that. Examining does not mean analyzing. It is just viewing things as they are, in the ordinary sense.

The reason our mind is known as *unborn* awareness is that we have no idea of its history. We have no idea where this mind, our crazy mind, began in the beginning. It has no shape, no color, no particular portrait or characteristics. It usually flickers on and off, off and on, all the time. Sometimes it is hibernating, sometimes it is all over the place. Look at your mind. That is a part of ultimate bodhichitta training or discipline. Our mind fluctuates constantly, back and forth, forth and back. Look at that, just *look at that!*

You could get caught up in the fascination of regarding all dharmas as dreams and perpetuate unnecessary visions and fantasies of all kinds.

Therefore it is very important to get to this next slogan, "Examine the nature of unborn awareness." When you look beyond the perceptual level alone, when you look at your own mind (which you cannot actually do, but you pretend to do), you find that there is nothing there. You begin to realize that there is nothing to hold on to. Mind is *unborn*. But at the same time, it is *awareness*, because you still perceive things. There is awareness and clarity. Therefore, you should contemplate that by seeing *who* is actually perceiving dharmas as dreams.

If you look further and further, at your mind's root, its base, you will find that it has no color and no shape. Your mind is, basically speaking, somewhat blank. There is nothing to it. We are beginning to cultivate a kind of shunyata possibility; although in this case that possibility is quite primitive in the sense of simplicity and workability. When we look at the root, when we try to find out why we see things, why we hear sounds, why we feel, and why we smell—if we look beyond that and beyond that—we find a kind of blankness.

That blankness is connected with mindfulness. To begin with, you are mindful of some *thing*: you are mindful of yourself, you are mindful of your atmosphere, and you are mindful of your breath. But if you look at *why* you are mindful, beyond *what* you are mindful of, you begin to find that there is no root. Everything begins to dissolve. That is the idea of examining the nature of unborn awareness.

4

Self-liberate even the antidote.

Looking at our basic mind, we begin to develop a twist of logic. We say, "Well, if nothing has any root, why bother? What's the point of doing this at all? Why don't we just believe that there is no root behind the whole thing?" At that point the next slogan, "Self-liberate even the antidote," is very helpful. The antidote is the realization that our discursive thoughts have no origin. That realization helps a lot; it becomes an antidote or a helpful suggestion. But we need to go beyond that antidote. We should not hang on to the so-whatness of it, the naiveté of it.

The idea of antidote is that everything is empty, so you have nothing

to care about. You have an occasional glimpse in your mind that nothing is existent. And because of the nature of that shunyata experience, whether anything great or small comes up, nothing really matters very much. It is like a backslapping joke in which everything is going to be hoo-ha, yuk-yuk-yuk. Nothing is going to matter very much, so let it go. All is shunyata, so who cares? You can murder, you can meditate, you can perform art, you can do all kinds of things—everything is meditation, whatever you do. But there is something very tricky about the whole approach. That dwelling on emptiness is a misinterpretation called the "poison of shunyata."

Some people say that they do not have to sit and meditate, because they always "understood." But that is very tricky. I have been trying very hard to fight such people. I never trust them at all—unless they actually sit and practice. You cannot split hairs by saying that you might be fishing in a Rocky Mountain spring and still meditating away; you might be driving your Porsche and meditating away; you might be washing dishes (which is more legitimate in some sense) and meditating away. That may be a genuine way of doing things, but it still feels very suspicious.

Antidotes are any notion that we can do what we want and that as long as we are meditative, everything is going to be fine. The text says to self-liberate even the antidote, the seeming antidote. We may regard going to the movies every minute, every day, every evening as our meditation, or watching television, or grooming our horse, feeding our dog, taking a long walk in the woods. There are endless possibilities like that in the Occidental tradition, or for that matter in the theistic tradition.

The theistic tradition talks about meditation and contemplation as a fantastic thing to do. The popular notion of God is that he created the world: the woods were made by God, the castle ruins were created by God, and the ocean was made by God. So we could swim and meditate or we could lie on the beach made by God and have a fantastic time. Such theistic nature worship has become a problem. We have so many holiday makers, nature worshipers, so many hunters.

In Scotland, at the Samye Ling meditation center where I was teaching, there was a very friendly neighbor from Birmingham, an industrial town, who always came up there on weekends to have a nice time. Occasionally he would drop into our meditation hall and sit with us, and he would say, "Well, it's nice you people are meditating, but I feel much

better if I walk out in the woods with my gun and shoot animals. I feel very meditative walking through the woods and listening to the sharp, subtle sounds of animals jumping forth, and I can shoot at them. I feel I am doing something worthwhile at the same time. I can bring back venison, cook it, and feed my family. I feel good about that."

The whole point of this slogan is that antidotes of any kind, or for that matter occupational therapies of any kind, are not regarded as appropriate things to do. We are not particularly seeking enlightenment or the simple experience of tranquillity—we are trying to get over our deception.

5

Rest in the nature of alaya, the essence.

The idea of this slogan is that in the sitting practice of meditation and with an understanding of ultimate bodhichitta, you actually transcend the seven types of consciousness and rest in the eighth consciousness, alaya. The first six types of consciousness are the sensory perceptions: [1] visual consciousness, [2] hearing consciousness, [3] smelling consciousness, [4] taste consciousness, [5] feeling or touch consciousness, and [6] mind consciousness, or the basic coordinating factor governing the other five. [Customarily, eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind consciousness.] The seventh type of consciousness, nuisance mind, is a kind of conglomeration which puts energy into all of that. In Tibetan it is called nyön-yi: *nyön* is short for *nyönmong* [*klesha* in Sanskrit], which literally means "nuisance," "defilements," "neurosis," and *yi* means "mind."

The idea of resting one's mind in the basic alaya is to free oneself from that sevenfold mind and rest in simplicity and in clear and nondiscriminating mind. You begin to feel that sight, smell, sound, and everything else that happens is a production of home ground, or headquarters. You recognize them and then come back to headquarters, where those productions began to manifest. You just rest in the needlessness of those productions.

The idea is that there is a resting place of some kind, which could be called primitive shamatha. There is a starting point, a returning point.

You can look at me and as you look at me you might check yourself—but you might check *beyond* yourself and find that some homing device is already taking place. So the idea is to rest in alaya, to be with the homing device, to rest where the orders and information come from.

This whole logic or process is based on taking it for granted that you trust yourself already, to begin with. You have some kind of relaxation with yourself. That is the idea of ultimate bodhichitta. You don't have to run away from yourself all the time in order to get something outside. You can just come home and relax. The idea is to return to home sweet home.

You try to give yourself good treatment. You do not follow fixed logic or fixed conceptual ideas of any kind, including discursive thought. Resting in the nature of alaya means going beyond the six sense consciousnesses, and even beyond the seventh consciousness, the fundamental discursive thought process which brings about the other six. The basic alaya principle goes beyond all that. Even in ordinary situations, if you actually trace back to find out where everything came from, you will find some primitive resting level. You could rest in that primitive basic existence, that existential level.

Starting from the basic alaya principle, we then develop alayavijnana, or alaya consciousness, which makes distinctions. We begin to create a separation between this and that, who and whom, what and what. That is the notion of consciousness, or we could even call it *self*-consciousness—who is on our side and who is on their side, so to speak. The basic alaya principle does not have any bias. That is why the basic alaya principle is called natural virtue. It is neutral. It is neither male nor female, therefore it is not on either side, and the question of courting is not involved. Alaya *consciousness* is biased. It is either male or female, because the courting concept is involved.

Basic wakefulness, sugatagarbha, is beyond alaya, but it goes along with alaya at the same time. It is pre-alaya, but it encompasses the alaya state. Alaya has basic goodness, but sugatagarbha has greater goodness. It is wakefulness in itself. From that point of view, even basic alaya could be said to be consciousness of some kind. Although it is not an official category of consciousness as such, it is a kind of awareness, or maybe even a kind of samsaric mind. But sugatagarbha is beyond that. It is indestructible—the ancestor, or parent, of alaya.

The process of perception, when you first perceive a sense object, has

several components. You have the actual mechanisms which perceive things, your physical faculties such as eyes, ears, and so forth. Beyond that are the mental faculties which use those particular instruments to reflect on certain objects. If you go beyond that, there is the intention of doing that, the fascination or inquisitiveness that wants to know how to relate with those objects. And if you go back beyond that altogether, you find there is a basic experience underlying all of that, which is known as the alaya principle.

According to this text on lojong, that experience is known as basic goodness. So this slogan refers to an experience, not simply to the structural, mechanical process of projection. We could describe that process with the analogy of a film projector. We have the screen, the phenomenal world; then we project ourselves onto that phenomenal world; and we have the film, which is the fickleness of mind, constantly changing frames. So we have a moving object projected onto the screen. That moving object is mechanically produced by the machinery of the projector which has lots of teeth to catch the film and mechanical devices to make sure that the projection is continuous—which is precisely the same situation as the sense organs. We look and we listen, therefore when we listen, we look. We connect things together by means of time, although things are shifting completely every moment. And behind the whole thing is the bulb, which projects everything onto the screen. That bulb is the cause of the whole thing. So resting in the nature of alaya is like resting in the nature of that bulb, which is behind the machinery of the film projector. Like the bulb, alaya is brilliant and shining. The bulb does not give in to the fickleness of the rest of the machine. It has no concern with how the screen is coming along or how the image is coming through.

Resting in alaya is the actual practice of ultimate bodhichitta, what happens during sitting practice. You experience ultimate bodhichitta at that level. Ultimate bodhichitta is purely the realization that phenomena cannot be regarded as solid, but at the same time they are self-luminous. In the analogy of the film projector, you have to work with the lamp. You take the lamp out of the projector—there's no monkey business with your projector—and you just screw that lamp onto your regular old-fashioned fixture and look at it. That is the self-liberating alaya.

It may be an embarrassing subject to discuss, but this book is designed for the ordinary practitioner. We are not believing in or cultivat-

ing alaya, but we are using it as a stepping-stone. It would be dangerous if you cultivated it as an end in itself. In this case it is just another step in the ladder. We are talking very simply about alaya as just a clear mind, a basic clear mind. It is simplicity and clarity and nondiscursive thought—very basic alaya. It may not be completely free from all the consciousnesses, including the eighth consciousness itself, but it is the alaya of basic potentiality.

We have to be very clear on this, generally speaking. We are not trying to grasp the buddha nature immediately at this point. This instruction on resting in alaya is given to somebody who is at the very beginning level. A lot of us have problems; we have no idea whether we are sitting or not sitting. We have struggles about that. So we are trying to work on our basic premises. It is a slowing-down process. For the first time we learn to slow down.

6

In postmeditation, be a child of illusion.

Being a child of illusion means that in the postmeditation experience there is a sense that everything is based on creating one's basic perceptions out of one's preconceptions. If you can cut through that and inject some basic understanding or awareness, you begin to see that the games going on are not even big games but simply illusory ones. To realize that requires a lot of mindfulness and awareness working together. Here we are actually talking about meditation in action, or postmeditation discipline.

Illusion does not mean haziness, confusion, or mirage. Being a child of illusion means that you continue what you have experienced in your sitting practice [resting in the nature of alaya] into postmeditation experience. Continuing with the analogy of the projector, during postmeditation you take the bulb out. You might not have the screen or the film at this point, but you transfer the bulb into your flashlight and carry it with you all the time.

You realize that after you finish sitting practice, you do not have to solidify phenomena. Instead, you can continue your practice and

develop some kind of ongoing awareness. If things become heavy and solid, you flash mindfulness and awareness into them. In that way you begin to see that everything is pliable and workable. Your attitude is that the phenomenal world is not evil, that "they" are not going to attack you or destroy you or kill you. Everything is workable and soothing.

It is like swimming: you swim along in your phenomenal world. You can't just float, you have to swim; you have to use your limbs. That process of using your limbs is the basic stroke of mindfulness and awareness. It is the "flash" quality of it—you flash on to things. So you are swimming constantly in postmeditation. And during meditation, you just sit and rest in the nature of your alaya, very simply. That is how we can develop ultimate bodhichitta. It is very basic and ordinary. You can actually do it. That's the whole idea.

It is not abstract, you simply look at phenomena and see their padded-wall quality, if you like. That's the illusion: padded walls everywhere. You think you are just about to strike against something very sharp, while having a cup of tea or whatever, and you find that things bounce back on you. There is not so much sharp contrast—everything is part of your mindfulness and awareness. Everything bounces back, like the ball in one of those little television Ping-Pong games. When it returns, you might throw it out again by not being a child of illusion, but it comes back again with a beep, so you become a child of illusion. It is "first thought, best thought." When you look at things, you find that they are soft and that they bounce back on you all the time. It's not particularly intellectual.

This slogan is about learning how to nurture ultimate bodhichitta in terms of mindfulness and awareness. We have to learn how we can actually experience that things in the postmeditation situation are still workable, that there is room, lots of space. The basic idea of being a child of illusion is that we don't feel claustrophobic. After your sitting practice, you might think, "Oh boy, now I have to do the postmeditation practices." But you don't have to feel that you are closed in. Instead you can feel that you are a child of illusion, that you are dancing around and clicking with those little beeps all the time. It is fresh and simple and very effective. The point is to treat yourself better. If you want to take a vacation from your practice, you can do so and still remain a child of illusion. Things just keep on beeping at you all the time. It's very lucid. It's almost whimsical.

Being a child of illusion is very simple. It is being willing to realize the simplicity of phenomenal play and to use that simplicity as a part of awareness and mindfulness practice. It's a very strong phrase, "child of illusion." Think about it. Try to be one. You have plenty of opportunities.

Relative Bodhichitta Slogans

7

Sending and taking should be practiced alternately. These two should ride the breath.

Sending and taking is a very important practice of the bodhisattva path. It is called tonglen in Tibetan: *tong* means "sending out" or "letting go," and *len* means "receiving," or "accepting." *Tonglen* is a very important term; you should remember it. It is the main practice in the development of relative bodhichitta.

The slogan says: "These two should ride the breath." We have been using the breath as a technique all along because it is constant and because it is something very natural to us. Therefore, we also use it here, in exactly the same way as we have been doing in shamatha discipline.

The practice of tonglen is quite straightforward; it is an actual sitting meditation practice. You give away your happiness, your pleasure, anything that feels good. All of that goes out with the out-breath. As you breathe in, you breathe in any resentments and problems, anything that feels bad. The whole point is to remove territoriality altogether.

The practice of tonglen is very simple. We do not first have to sort out our doctrinal definitions of goodness and evil. We simply breathe out any old good and breathe in any old bad. At first we may seem to be relating primarily to our *ideas* of good and bad. But as we go on, it becomes more real. On the one hand, you can't expect a friendly letter from your grandmother with whom you have been engaged in warfare for the past five years. She probably will not write you a kind letter after three days of tonglen. On the other hand, sending and taking will definitely have a good effect quite naturally. I think it is a question of your general decorum and attitude.

Sometimes we feel terrible that we are breathing in poison which might kill us and at the same time breathing out whatever little goodness we have. It seems to be completely impractical. But once we begin to break through, we realize that we have even more goodness and we also have more things to breathe in. So the whole process becomes somewhat balanced. That always happens, but it takes long training. Sending and taking are interdependent. The more negativity we take in with a sense of openness and compassion, the more goodness there is to breathe out on the other side. So there is nothing to lose. It is all one process.

In tonglen we are aspiring to take on the suffering of other sentient beings. We mean that literally: we are actually willing to take that on. As such, it can have real effects, both on the practitioner himself and on others. There is a story about a great Kadampa teacher who was practicing tonglen and who actually did take another's pain on himself: when somebody stoned a dog outside his house, the teacher himself was bruised. And the same kind of thing could happen to us. But tonglen should not be used as any kind of antidote. You do not do it and then wait for the effect—you just do it and drop it. It doesn't matter whether it works or not: if it works, you breathe that out; if it does not work, you breathe that in. So you do not possess anything. That is the point.

Usually you would like to hold on to your goodness. You would like to make a fence around yourself and put everything bad outside it: foreigners, your neighbors, or what have you. You don't want them to come in. You don't even want your neighbors to walk their dogs on your property because they might make a mess on your lawn. So in ordinary samsaric life, you don't send and receive at all. You try as much as possible to guard those pleasant little situations you have created for yourself. You try to put them in a vacuum, like fruit in a tin, completely purified and clean. You try to hold on to as much as you can, and anything outside of your territory is regarded as altogether problematic. You don't want to catch the local influenza or the local diarrhea attack that is going around. You are constantly trying to ward off as much as you can. You may not have enough money to build a castle or a wall around you, but your front door is very reliable. You are always putting double locks on it. Even when you check into a hotel, the management always tells you to double-lock your door and not to let anybody come in unless you check them out first. You can read that in the Innkeepers Act posted on

the back of hotel doors. That will probably tell you the whole thing. Aren't we crazy?

Basically speaking, the mahayana path is trying to show us that we don't have to secure ourselves. We can afford to extend out a little bit—quite a bit. The basic idea of practicing sending and taking is almost a rehearsal, a discipline of passionlessness, a way of overcoming territory. Overcoming territory consists of going out with the out-breath, giving away and sending out, and bringing in with your in-breath as much as you can of other people's pain and misery. You would like to become the object of that pain and misery. You want to experience it fully and thoroughly.

You practice putting others first by means of a very literal discipline called tonglen. How are you going to do that in the ordinary sense? Should you just run up to somebody in the street and say, "Hey, take my candy and give me the Kleenex in your pocket?" Of course, you could do that if you like, and if you were versatile enough, you could probably do it without offending anybody. But that is experimenting with others on a very crude level. What we are doing is different. We have a way of practicing putting others first—by placing letting go and receiving on the medium of the breath. The first stage of tonglen consists of the practice of sending and taking mentally, psychologically, slowly and slowly. Then at the end one might actually *do* such a thing. It has been said in the scriptures that one can even practice tonglen by taking a piece of fruit in one hand and giving it to the other hand.

There are obviously a lot of obstacles to practicing tonglen, particularly since we are involved in modern industrial society. But you can do it step-by-step, which actually makes you grow up and become the ultimate adult. The main point is to develop the psychological attitude of exchanging oneself for others: instead of being John Doe, you could become Joe Schmidt. You might have a lot of pride and reservations, but nonetheless you can begin to do that. Obviously, to begin with, tonglen is more of a psychological state than anything else. If everybody began to give things away to each other, there would be tremendous conflict. But if you develop the attitude of being willing to part with your precious things, to give away your precious things to others, that can help begin to create a good reality.

How do we actually practice tonglen? First we think about our parents, or our friends, or anybody who has sacrificed his or her life for our

benefit. In many cases, we have never even said thank you to them. It is very important to think about that, not in order to develop guilt but just to realize how mean we have been. We always said, "I want," and they did so much for us, without any complaint.

I'm sure you have a lot of stories about how badly you treated your parents and friends, who helped you so much. They dedicated their entire being for your sake, and you never even bothered to say thank you or write them a letter. You should think of the people who cared for you so much that they didn't even look for confirmation. There are many people like that. Sometimes somebody comes along out of the blue and tries to help you completely. Such people do everything for you—they serve you, they sacrifice themselves, and then they go away without even leaving an address or a number to call. All along there have been people who have done things for you. You should think of those situations and work them into your tonglen practice. As your breath goes out, you give them the best of what is yours in order to repay their kindness. In order to promote goodness in the world, you give out everything good, the best that you have, and you breathe in other people's problems, their misery, their torment. You take in their pain on their behalf.

That is the basic idea of relative bodhichitta practice. It is a very action-oriented practice. We give as much as we can give, we expand as much as we can expand. We have a lot to expand because we have basic goodness, which is an inexhaustible treasure. Therefore we have nothing at all to lose and we can receive more, also. We can be shock absorbers of other people's pain all the time. It is a very moving practice—not that I'm saying we are all in a train, particularly. The more we give our best, the more we are able to receive other people's worst. Isn't that great?

Tonglen seems to be one of the best measures we could take to solve our problems of ecology and pollution. Since everything is included, tonglen is the fundamental way to solve the pollution problem—it is the only way. Quite possibly it will have the physical effect of cleaning up pollution in big cities, maybe even in the entire world. That possibility is quite powerful.

Sending and taking is not regarded as proof of our personal bravery. It is not that we are the best people because we do tonglen. Sending and taking is regarded as a natural course of exchange; it just takes place. We might have difficulty taking in pollution, taking in what is bad, but we

should take it in wholeheartedly—completely in. We should begin to feel that our lungs are altogether filled with bad air, that we have actually cleaned out the world out there and taken it into ourselves. Then some switch takes place, and as we breathe out, we find that we still have an enormous treasure of good breath which goes out all the time.

We start by thinking of our own mother or parents, of somebody we really love so much, care for so much, like our mother, who nursed us, took care of us, paid attention to us, and brought us up to this level of grown-upness. Such affection and kindness was radiated to us by that person that we think of her first. The analogy of our mother is not necessarily the only way. The idea is that of a motherly person who was kind and gentle and patient to us. We must have somebody who is gentle, somebody who has been kind to us in our life and who shared his or her goodness with us. If we do not have that, then we are somewhat in trouble, we begin to hate the world—but there is also a measure for that, which is to breathe in our hatred and resentment of the world. If we do not have good parents, a good mother, or a good person who reflected such a kind attitude toward us to think about, then we can think of ourselves.

When you begin to do tonglen practice, you begin to think of the goodness that you can give out, what you can give to others. You have lots of good things to give, to breathe out to others. You have lots of goodness, lots of sanity, lots of healthiness. All of that comes straight from the basic awakened and enlightened attitude, which is alive and strong and powerful. So what you give out is no longer just imagination or something that you have to crank up; you actually have something good to give out to somebody. In turn, you can breathe in something that is painful and negative. The suffering that other people are experiencing can be brought in because, in contrast to that, you have basic healthiness and wakefulness, which can certainly absorb anything that comes to it. You can absorb more suffering because you have a lot more to give.

The idea of warmth is a basic principle of tonglen practice. What we are doing is also called maitri practice, or in Sanskrit, *maitri bhavana*. *Maitri* means "friendliness," "warmth," or "sympathy," and *bhavana* means "meditation" or "practice." In tonglen, or maitri bhavana, we breathe out anything gentle and kind, feeling good about anything at all—even feeling good about eating a chocolate cake or drinking cool water or

warming ourselves by the fire. Whatever goodness exists in us, whatever we feel good about, we breathe out to others. We must feel good sometimes—whether it lasts a minute or a second or whatever. And then we breathe in the opposite situation, whatever is bad and terrible, gross and obnoxious. We try to breathe that into ourselves.

I would like to say quite bluntly that it is very important for you to take tonglen practice quite seriously. I doubt that you will freak out. The main point is actually to do it properly and thoroughly. Beyond that, it is important to take delight that you are in a position to do something which most other humans never do at all. The problem with most people is that they are always trying to give out the bad and take in the good. That has been the problem of society in general and the world altogether. But now we are on the mahayana path and the logic is reversed. That is fantastic, extraordinary! We are actually getting the inner "scoop," so to speak, on Buddha's mind, directly and at its best. Please think of that. This practice will be extremely helpful to you, so please take it seriously.

Tonglen practice is not purely mind training. What you are doing might be real! When you practice, you have to be very literal: when you breathe out, you really breathe out good; when you breathe in, you really breathe in bad. We can't be faking.

Start with what is immediate. Just this. *This.* You should feel that the whole thing is loose. Nothing is really attached to you or anchored to you; everything is detachable. When you let go, it is all gone. When things come back to you, they too are unanchored, from an outsider's point of view. They come to you, and you go out to them. It is a very exciting experience, actually. You feel a tremendous sense of space.

When you let go, it is like cutting a kite from its cord. But even without its cord, the kite still comes back, like a parachute landing on you. You feel a sense of fluidity and things begin to circulate so wonderfully. Nothing is being dealt with in any form of innuendo or in undercurrents. There is no sense of someone working the politics behind the scenes. Everything is completely free-flowing. It is so wonderful—and you can do it. That is precisely what we mean when we talk about genuineness. You can be so absolutely blatantly good at giving and so good at taking. It is interesting.

In tonglen practice, we replace the mindfulness of the breath that doesn't have any contents with the mindfulness of the breath that does.

The contents are the emotional, discursive thoughts which are being given the reference point of people's pain and pleasure. So you are supposed to be actually working hard for the sake of other people. You are supposed to be helping people. If somebody is bleeding in front of you, you can't just stand there holding the bandages—you are supposed to run over and put bandages on him, for goodness' sake! You just do it. And then you come back and sit down and watch to see who else might need bandages. It is as simple as that. It is the first-aid approach.

People need help. So we have to wake up a little bit more. We have to be careful that we don't just regard this as another daydream or concept. We have to make it very literal and very ordinary. Just breathe out and in. It is very literal, very straightforward. Discursiveness doesn't take over—unless you are possessed by a demon or the ghost of Julius Caesar or something like that. Just make it very direct, very literal and regimented. Your breathing goes out for *that*, your breathing comes in for *this—that, this, that, this*. You breathe out good and breathe in bad. It is very simple and very literal.

You don't practice tonglen and then wait for the effect. You just do it and then drop it. You don't look for results. Whether it works or not, you just do it and drop it, do it and drop it. If it doesn't work, you take in, and if it works, you give out. So you do not possess anything. That is the whole idea. When anything comes out well, you give it away; if anything does not work out, you take it in.

Tonglen practice is not a very subtle thing. It is not philosophical, it is not even psychological. It is a very, very simple-minded approach. The practice is very primitive, in fact, the most primitive of all Buddhist practices. When you think of Buddhism and all the sophisticated wisdom, philosophies, and techniques that have been developed, it is amazing that they came up with this practice, that we do such a simple and primitive thing. But we do it and it works. It seems to have been fine for several centuries, and those centuries have produced a lot of bodhisattvas, including Buddha himself.

Just relate with the technique; the discursiveness of it doesn't matter. When you go out, you are out; when you come in, you are in. When you are hot, you are hot; when you are cool, you are cool. Just cut into that situation and be very precise. Make it very literal and very simple. We don't want to make this into a revolutionary sort of imaginary,

mind-oriented social work approach or psychological approach. Let's do it properly.

We have to be honest to begin with. That is a very important point. And we have to be very literal with the technique. It has already been worked on by generations of people in the past, and it has proven to be true. So we can afford to be literal. We don't have to research it any further. Instead we could be quite faithful to the practice as it is and just do it for a while. Then we might discover the impact of that and we could go on from there. Suddenly, we might find that we could attain enlightenment.

Sending and taking is just like field training, actually. It is like soldiers learning how to puncture a bag full of sand: regarding that as the enemy, they yell, "Hooooh!" [*Vidyadhara makes slashing motion with fan*] as they pierce that bag of sand with their bayonets. A lot of soldiers might have a hard time being involved with nature because they come from cities where people have no idea how to work with snow or the heat of summer; they don't know how to ford rivers or how to dry their clothes or how to work with dirt and cleanliness, so soldiers have to be trained in the field. In a similar way, warriors who follow the bodhisattva path go through the same kind of field training.

If we begin to get hurt by being genuine, that is good. That is the level at which we are capable of exchanging ourselves for others. We begin to feel that because we are doing such genuine, honest work we would like to invite others. It is not so much that we only want to give out our pleasure to others and bring in their pain. There is more to it than that. We want to give our genuineness out to others and we want to invite their hypocrisy into us. That is much more than just exchanging pain for pleasure. It is the greatest way of exchanging ourselves for others, and it is needed in the world very, very badly. Exchanging pain for pleasure is very simple and easy to do. For instance, someone across the street would like to take a hot bath, but when he jumps into the water, it is cold. So you might say, "Come over here and jump into my hot bath with me. You jump into my hot bath and I'll jump into your cold bath." That is fine, there is no problem with that—but jumping into each other's hypocrisy is more interesting. That is what we are trying to do.

Our genuineness has to be shared with someone. It has to be given up. Genuineness shouldn't be regarded as our one and only family jewel that we want to hang on to. We have to give our genuineness away to

someone. We don't particularly lose it that way; instead we bring other people's deception into us, and we work on our own genuineness along with that. So exchanging ourselves for others is something more than we might have thought. It is more than just jumping from a hot bath to a cold bath.

Beyond that, you begin to develop a sense of joy. You are actually doing something very useful and workable and fundamentally wonderful. You are not only teaching yourself how to be unselfish, in the conventional sense, but you are also teaching the world how to overcome hypocrisy, which is becoming thicker and thicker lately as the world gets more and more sophisticated, so to speak—more and more into the dark ages, in other words.

Sending and taking is an extension of shamatha discipline. In shamatha discipline, we do not dwell on anything, but we are processed by working with movement. We don't just try to hold our mind completely steady, completely settled, but we try to use the fickleness of our mental process by following our breath and by looking at our subconscious thoughts. We develop bodhichitta in exactly the same way that we practice shamatha, only our practice in this case is much more highlighted because, instead of working with subconscious mind or discursive thoughts alone, we are looking much further, to the *content* of our thoughts, which is either anger or lust or stupidity. So we are going slightly beyond shamatha technique to include the contents of these thoughts.

The whole thing is that for a long time we have wanted to inflict pain on others and cultivate pleasure for ourselves. That has been the problem all along. In this case, we are reversing the logic altogether to see what happens. Instead of inflicting pain on others, we take on the pain ourselves; instead of sucking out others' pleasure, we give our pleasure to them. We have been doing the usual samsaric thing all the time, so we are just trying to reverse samsaric logic a little bit to see what happens. And what usually happens is that you become a gentle person. You don't become demonic, you become workable. You see, you have been so unreasonable all along that now, in order to make yourself a reasonable person, you have to overdo the whole thing slightly. By doing so, you begin to realize how to be a decent person. That is called relative bodhichitta. At this point, it is important to have that particular kind of experience, it is important to understand your unreasonability.

Tonglen is also very important in terms of vajrayana practice. Therefore, vajrayana practitioners should also pay heed to this practice. They should do it very carefully. Without tonglen, you cannot practice the vajrayana disciplines of utpattikrama [developing stage] and sampannakrama [completion stage] at all. You become a deity without a heart, just a papier-mâché deity.[2] There is a story about two vajrayana masters who were exchanging notes on their students. One said, "My students can perform miracles, but somehow after that they seem to lose heart. They become ordinary people." The other one said, "Strangely enough, my vajrayana students cannot perform miracles, but they always remain healthy." The two teachers discussed that question on and on. Then somebody said, "Well, how about having all of them practice tonglen?" Both teachers laughed and said, "Ha! That must be it." From that point of view, it is very important for us to have a basic core of reality taking place, so that when we do vajrayana practice, we don't just dress up as deities, with masks and costumes.

Even in hinayana practice, we could just wear our monks' robes and shave our heads, and all the rest of it. Without tonglen practice, both hinayana and vajrayana become like the lion's corpse. [Because the lion is the king of beasts, when he dies, it is said that his corpse is not attacked by other animals but is left to be eaten by maggots from within.] As the Buddha said, his teaching will not be destroyed by outsiders but by insiders who do not practice the true dharma. At that point the Buddha was definitely referring to the bodhisattva path. It is the mahayana tradition and discipline that hold the hinayana and vajrayana together. Please think of that.

8

Three objects, three poisons, and three seeds of virtue.

This slogan is connected with the postmeditation experience, which comes after the main practice. Relating to passion, aggression, and ignorance in the main practice of tonglen is very intense, but the postmeditation practice is somewhat lighter.

The three objects are friends, enemies, and neutrals. The three poi-

sons are passion, aggression, and ignorance or delusion. And the three seeds of virtue are the absence of passion, aggression, and ignorance.

The practice of this slogan is to take the passion, aggression, and delusion of others upon ourselves so that they may be free and undefiled. Passion is wanting to magnetize or possess; aggression is wanting to reject, attack, cast out; and ignorance or indifference is that you couldn't be bothered, you are not interested, a kind of anti-prajna energy. We take upon ourselves the aggression of our enemies, the passion of our friends, and the indifference of the neutrals.

When we reflect on our enemy, that inspires aggression. Whatever aggression our enemy has provided for us—let that aggression be ours and let the enemy thereby be free from any kind of aggression. Whatever passion has been created by our friends, let us take that neurosis into ourselves and let our friends be freed from passion. And the indifference of those who are in the middle or unconcerned—those who are ignorant, deluded, or uncaring—let us bring that neurosis into ourselves and let those people be free from ignorance.

Whenever any of the three poisons happens in your life, you should do the sending and taking practice. You just look at your passion, your aggression, and your delusion—you do not regard them as a problem or as a promise. Instead, when you are in a state of aggression, you say, "May this aggression be a working base for me. May I learn to hold my aggression to myself, and may all sentient beings thereby attain freedom from aggression." Or "May this passion be mine. Because it belongs to me by virtue of my holding on to it, therefore may others be free of such passion." For indifference, you do the same thing.

The purpose of doing that is that when you begin to hold the three poisons as yours, when you possess them fully and completely, when you take charge of them fully, you will find, interestingly enough, that the logic is reversed. If you have no object of aggression, you cannot hold your own aggression purely by yourself. If you have no object of passion, you cannot hold your passion yourself. And in the same way, you cannot hold on to your ignorance either.

By holding your poison, you let go of the object, or the intent, of your poison. You see, what usually happens is that you have objects of the three poisons. When you have an object of aggression, for example, you feel angry toward it—right? But if your anger is not directed *toward* something, the object of aggression falls apart. It is impossible to have

an object of anger, because the anger belongs to you rather than to its object. You give your compassion to the object so that it doesn't provoke your anger—then what are you angry with? You find yourself just hanging out there with no one to project onto. Therefore, you can cut the root of the three poisons by dealing with others rather than by dealing with yourself. So an interesting twist takes place.

9

In all activities, train with slogans.

This slogan, which is connected with postmeditation practice, is very interesting and important. We have been using this technique all the time, throughout our practice. Particularly in dharmic environments, we post the slogans wherever we have a wall in order to remind ourselves of them. The point is to catch the first thought. It is not all that simple-minded. The idea is that in catching the first thought, that first thought should have some words.

In this case, whenever you feel that quality of me-ness, whenever you feel "I"—and maybe "am" as well—then you should think of these two sayings: [1] May I receive all evils; may my virtues go to others. [2] Profit and victory to others; loss and defeat to myself.[3] It doesn't have to be verbalized, but it is a thought process: whenever you have a sense of yuckiness, you make it your property; whenever you have a sense of vision or upliftedness, you give it to others. So there is that sort of black and white contrast: black and white, nausea and relaxation, feeling ugly and feeling pretty. [*Vidyadhara flips his hand back and forth.*] That flip takes place very simply. When there is "I," you take it—when there is "am," you give it. It takes quite a lot of effort because it is a big job. That is why it is called the mahayana [big vehicle]; it is a big deal. You cannot fall asleep at the wheel when you are driving on this big highway. It takes quite a lot of effort! It is no joke. You can't go wrong with such heavy-handedness. It is the best kind of heavy-handedness that has ever occurred. It's no joke.

10

Begin the sequence of sending and taking with yourself.

The way we often express this idea is "first thought, best thought." Usually we have the feeling that *this* happens first, before other or *that*. So whenever anything happens, the first thing to do is to take on the pain yourself. Afterward, you give away anything which is left beyond that, anything pleasurable. We are not necessarily talking about pleasurable in the sense of feeling extraordinarily good—but anything other than pain is given away. So you do not hold on to any possible way of entertaining yourself or giving yourself good treatment.

This slogan is connected with giving up passion, as it is passion which makes you demand pleasure for yourself. Therefore, this slogan is also connected very vividly and closely with the paramita of discipline. We are not talking about masochism or about killing or destroying yourself. But you begin to realize that anything connected with the demands of wanting and not wanting is constantly involved with the desire to possess and not to give out. So the whole approach here is to open your territory completely, to let go of everything. If you suddenly discover that a hundred hippies want to camp in your living room, let them do so! But then those hippies also have to practice.

The basic idea of this practice is actually very joyful. It is wonderful that human beings can do such a fantastic exchange and that they are willing to invite such undesirable situations into their world. It is wonderful that they are willing to let go of even their smallest corners of secrecy and privacy, so that their holding on to anything is gone completely. That is very brave. We could certainly say that this is the world of the warrior, from the bodhisattva's point of view.

POINT THREE

Transformation of Bad Circumstances into the Path of Enlightenment

Point Three and the Paramita of Patience

Now that we have studied the ultimate and relative bodhichitta practices and the postmeditation experiences connected with them, the third group of slogans is connected with how to carry out all those practices as path. In Tibetan this group of slogans is known as lamkhyer: *lam* meaning "path" and *khyer* meaning "carrying." In other words, whatever happens in your life should be included as part of your journey. That is the basic idea.

This group of slogans is connected with the paramita of patience. The definition of patience is forbearance. Whatever happens, you don't react to it. The obstacle to patience is aggression. Patience does not mean biding your time and trying to slow down. Impatience arises when you become too sensitive and you don't have any way to deal with your environment, your atmosphere. You feel very touchy, very sensitive. So the paramita of patience is often described as a suit of armor. Patience has a sense of dignity and forbearance. You are not so easily disturbed by the world's aggression.

11

When the world is filled with evil, Transform all mishaps into the path of bodhi.

Continuing with the idea of carrying everything to the path, the basic slogan of this section is:

> *When the world is filled with evil,*
> *Transform all mishaps into the path of bodhi.*

That is to say, whatever occurs in your life—environmental problems, political problems, or psychological problems—should be transformed into a part of your wakefulness, or bodhi. Such wakefulness is a result of the practice of shamatha-vipashyana discipline as well as your basic understanding of soft spot, or bodhichitta.

In other words, you do not blame the environment or the world political situation. Certain people are inspired to write poetry and act in such a way that they sacrifice their lives for a social cause. We could quite safely say that the Vietnam War produced a lot of poets and philosophers, but their work is not in keeping with this mahayana principle. They were purely reacting against the world being filled with evil; they were not able to transform mishaps into the path of bodhi. Such poets may even regard evil as material for their writing. If the Vietnam War had never happened, we would have fewer of such poets and philosophers. According to this slogan, when the world is filled with evil, or even when the world is *not* filled with evil, any mishaps that might occur should all be transformed into the path of bodhi, or wakefulness. That understanding comes from your sitting practice and your general awareness.

This slogan says practically everything about how we can practice generosity as well. In our ordinary life, our immediate surroundings or our once-removed surroundings are not necessarily hospitable. There are always problems and difficulties. There are difficulties even for those who proclaim that their lives are very successful, those who have

become the president of their country, or the richest millionaires, or the most famous poets or movie stars or surfers or bullfighters. Even if our lives go right, according to our expectations, there are still difficulties. Obstacles always arise. That is something everybody experiences. And when obstacles happen, any mishaps connected with those obstacles—poverty mentality, fixating on loss and gain, or any kind of competitiveness—should be transformed into the path of bodhi.

That is a very powerful and direct message. It is connected with not feeling poverty-stricken all the time. You might feel inadequate because you have a sick father and a crazy mother and you have to take care of them, or because you have a distorted life and money problems. For that matter, even if you have a successful life and everything is going all right, you might feel inadequate because you have to work constantly to maintain your business. A lot of those situations could be regarded as expressions of your own timidity and cowardice. They could all be regarded as expressions of your poverty mentality.

Having already experienced the possibilities of absolute and relative bodhichitta, and practiced sending and taking, you should also begin to build up confidence and joy in your own richness. That richness is the essence of generosity. It is the sense of resourcefulness, that you can deal with whatever is available around you and not feel poverty-stricken. Even if you are abandoned in the middle of a desert and you want a pillow, you can find a piece of rock with moss on it that is quite comfortable to put your head on. Then you can lie down and have a good sleep. Having such a sense of resourcefulness and richness seems to be the main point. Practicing that resourcefulness and richness, or generosity, is the way to become mahayanists or even vajrayanists.

We have found that a lot of people complain that they are involved in intense domestic situations: they relate with everything in their lives purely on the level of pennies, tiny stitches, drops of water, grains of rice. But we do not have to do that—we can expand our vision by means of generosity. We can give something to others. We don't always have to receive something first in order to give something away. Having connected with the notion of generosity, we begin to realize a sense of wealth automatically. The nature of generosity is to be free from desire, free from attachment, able to let go of anything.

This slogan is the basic statement of the third point of lojong practice. Within this category, we have three further practices. The next two slo-

gans are connected with the practice of relative bodhichitta, how to carry what occurs in your life onto the path of relative bodhichitta. The following slogan ["Seeing confusion as the four kayas / Is unsurpassable shunyata protection"] is connected with absolute bodhichitta practice, how you carry that out as your path. And the final slogan in this section [slogan 15] is connected with the particular actions that enable you to carry whatever occurs in your practice onto the path.

12

Drive all blames into one.

This slogan is about dealing with conventional reality, or *kündzop*. No matter what appears in our ordinary experience, whatever trips we might be involved in, whatever interesting and powerful situations—we do not have any expectations in return for our kindness. When we are kind to somebody, there are no expectations that there will be any reward for that. Drive all blames into one means that all the problems and the complications that exist around our practice, realization, and understanding are not somebody else's fault. All the blame always starts with ourselves.

A lot of people seem to get through this world and actually make quite a comfortable life by being compassionate and open—even seemingly compassionate and open. They seem to get along in this world. Yet although we share the same kind of world, we ourselves get hit constantly. We get blamed and we get into trouble—emotional problems, financial problems, domestic, relationship, and sociological problems are happening all the time. What is playing tricks on us? A popular phrase says, "Don't lay your trip on me." Interestingly, trips *are* laid on us, but not *by* anybody. We decide to take on those trips ourselves, and then we become resentful and angry.

We might have entirely the same lifestyle as somebody else. For instance, we could be sharing a room with a college mate, eating the same problematic food, sharing the same shitty house, having the same schedule and the same teachers. Our roommate manages to handle everything okay and find his or her freedom. We, on the other hand, are stuck with

that memory and filled with resentment all the time. We would like to be revolutionary, to blow up the world. But who did that to us? We could say that the schoolteacher did it, that everybody hates us and they did it. But *why* do they hate us? That is a very interesting point.

The blame for every mishap that happens to us is always directed naturally to us; it is our particular doing. This is not just purely mahayana wishy-washy thinking. You might say that what we are discussing tonight is purely mahayana—once we get into tantra, we might get revenge on those people. But that doesn't work. I would request you not to try that. Everything is based on our own uptightness. We could blame the organization; we could blame the government; we could blame the police force; we could blame the weather; we could blame the food; we could blame the highways; we could blame our own motorcars, our own clothes; we could blame an infinite variety of things. But it is we who are not letting go, not developing enough warmth and sympathy—which makes us problematic. So we cannot blame anybody.

Of course, we could build up all kinds of philosophies and think we are representing the voice of the rest of the world, saying that this is the world's opinion, that is what happens in the world. "Don't you see that you should not make me suffer this? The world is this way, the true world is that way." But we are *not* speaking on behalf of the world, we are simply speaking on behalf of ourselves.

This slogan applies whenever we complain about anything, even that our coffee is cold or the bathroom is dirty. It goes very far. Everything is due to our own uptightness, so to speak, which is known as ego holding, ego fixation. Since we are so uptight about ourselves, that makes us very vulnerable at the same time. We consequently provide the ideal target. We get hit, but nobody means to hit us—we are actually inviting the bullets. So there we are, in the good old world. Driving all blames into one is a very good idea.

The intention of driving all blames into one is that otherwise you will not enter the bodhisattva path. Therefore, you do not want to lay any emotional, aggressive blame on anybody at all. So driving all blames into one begins with that attitude. On that basis, you drive all blames into one again at the level of vipashyana. This involves actually experiencing the real, visible, logical consequences of doing otherwise. For instance, you could drive all blames into Joe Schmidt, but instead you drive all blames into yourself. In this case, you actually begin to see the possibility

that aggression and neurosis is expanded if you drive your neurosis into somebody else. So instead you drive your blames onto yourself. That is the basic point.

All of this seems to come under the general categories of compassion for others and having a loving attitude to oneself, known in Sanskrit as karuna and maitri. In other words, the experience of karuna and maitri is to drive all blames into one. So this slogan is connected with the basic discipline of the bodhisattva path, which is to refrain from any kind of ill-doing. The traditional listing of the forty-six ways in which a bodhisattva fails [see appendix] could be used in connection with driving all blames into one. They are connected very basically.

This slogan is the essence of the bodhisattva path. Even though somebody else has made a terrible boo-boo and blamed it on you, you should take the blame yourself. In terms of power, it is a much simpler and more direct way of controlling the situation. In addition, it is the most direct way of simplifying complicated neuroses into one point. Also, if you look for volunteers around you to take the blame, there will be no volunteers other than yourself. By taking that particular blame on yourself, you reduce the neurosis that's happening around you. You also reduce any paranoia existing in other people, so that those people might have clearer vision.

You can actually say, "I take the blame. It's my fault that such and such a thing happened and that such and such things took place as a result." It is very simple and ordinary. You can actually communicate with somebody who is not in a defensive mood, since you already took all the blame. It is much better and easier to talk to somebody when you have accepted the blame already. Then you can clarify the situation, and quite possibly the person you are talking to, who might be the cause of the particular problem, would realize that he has done something terrible himself. He might recognize his own wrongdoing. But it helps that the blame, which is just a paper tiger at that point, has already been taken on by you. That helps.

This kind of approach becomes very powerfully important. I've actually done it thousands of times. I've taken a lot of blame personally. A person may actually do a terrible thing based on his or her understanding of my recommendation. But that's okay, I can take it on wholeheartedly as my problem. In that way there is some chance of working with such

a person, and the person begins to go along and fulfill his actions properly, and everything is fine.

That's a tip for bureaucrats. If individuals can take the blame themselves and let their friends off to continue their work or duty, that will make the whole organization work better and allow it to be much more functional. When you say, "You're full of shit! I didn't do such a thing. It wasn't me, it's you who did it. There's no blame on me," the whole thing gets very complicated. You begin to find this little plop of a dirty thing bouncing around in the bureaucracy, something like a football bouncing back and forth. And if you fight over it too much, you have tremendous difficulty dissolving or resolving that particular block, plop, slug. So the earlier you take the blame, the better. And although it is not really, fundamentally your fault at all, you should take it as if it's yours.

This seems to be the interesting point where the two aspects of the bodhisattva vow, mönpa and jukpa [desiring to enter and actually entering into bodhisattva discipline], come together. It is how you work with your fellow sentient beings. If you do not allow a little bit of blame and injustice to come to you, nothing is going to work. And if you do not really absorb all the blame, but say it is not yours since you are too good and are doing so well, then nothing is going to work. This is so because everybody is looking for someone to blame, and they would like to blame *you*—not because you have done anything, but because they probably think you have a soft spot in your heart. They think that if they put their jam or honey or glue on you, then you actually might buy it and say, "Okay, the blame is mine."

Once you begin to do that, it is the highest and most powerful logic, the most powerful incantation you can make. You can actually make the whole thing functional. You can absorb the poison—then the rest of the situation becomes medicine. If nobody is willing to absorb the blame, it becomes a big interrelational football. It is not even tight like a good football, but filled with a lot of glue and gooey all over the outside as well. Everybody tries to pass it on to each other and nothing happens. Finally that football begins to grow bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. Then it causes revolutions and all the rest.

As far as international politics are concerned, somebody is always trying to put the blame on somebody else, to pass that huge, overbuilt, gooey, dirty, smelly, gigantic football with all sorts of worms coming out of it. People say, "It's not mine, it's yours." The communists say it

belongs to the capitalists, and the capitalists say it belongs to the communists. Throwing it back and forth doesn't help anyone at all. So even from the point of view of political theory—if there is such a thing as politics in the mahayana or in Buddhism—it is important for individuals to absorb unjustified blame and to work with that. It is very important and necessary.

Such an approach is neither very theistic and Occidental nor is it Oriental. But it is possible to do, which is one of the interesting points about nontheism. If you are in a theistic discipline, you don't actually take the blame. Supposedly this guy up in the sky with the beard and big nose says that when you're right, you're right, so fight for your right; and when you're wrong, you just repent. You should do your duty and all that. So much for that old hat. But for a lot of people, this may be a new hat, actually. You could freak out and say, "Do you mean to say that I should take the blame for somebody else? I should get myself killed for that?" You don't have to go so far as to do that—but you actually can accommodate that much blame. You can do that.

Usually, with any problems at all that might occur in your life—political, environmental, psychological, or for that matter, domestic or spiritual—you always decide to blame it on somebody else. You may not have a particular individual to blame, but you still come up with the basic logic that something is wrong. You might go to the authorities or your political leaders or your friends and demand that the environment be changed. That is your usual way of complaining to people. You might organize a group of people who, like yourself, blame the environment, and you might collect signatures for a petition and give it to some leader who might be able to change the environment. Or, for that matter, your complaint might be purely individual: if your husband or wife is in love with somebody else, you might ask him or her to give up his or her lover. But as far as you yourself are concerned, you feel so pure and good, you never touch yourself at all. You want to maintain yourself 100 percent. You are always asking somebody else to do something for you on a larger scale or on a smaller scale. But if you look very closely at what you are doing, it becomes unreasonable.

Sometimes, if he is brave enough, your husband might say to you, "Isn't there some blame on your side as well? Mightn't you also have to join in and do something about it?" Or if your wife is brave enough, she will tell you that the situation might have something to do with both of

you. If your spouse is somewhat timid and intelligent, he might say, "Both of us are to blame." But nobody says, "It is *you* who has to change." Whenever anybody does say, "It's your problem, not anybody else's," you don't like it at all. We have a problem with relative bodhichitta here.

The text says: "Drive all blames into one." The reason you have to do that is because you have been cherishing yourself so much, even at the cost of sacrificing somebody else's life. You have been cherishing yourself, holding yourself so dearly. Although sometimes you might say that you don't like yourself, even then in your heart of hearts you know that you like yourself so much that you're willing to throw everybody else down the drain, down the gutter. You are really willing to do that. You are willing to let somebody sacrifice his life, give himself away for you. And who are you, anyway? So the point is that all blames should be driven into oneself. This slogan is the first slogan connected with viewing your whole life as part of the path of relative bodhichitta.

This slogan does not mean you should not speak up. If you see something that is obviously destructive to everybody, you should speak out. But you can speak out in the form of driving all blames into yourself. The question is how to present it to the authorities. Usually you come at them in an aggressive, traditionally American way. You have been trained to speak for yourself and for others in the democratic style of the "lord of speech." You come out with placards and complaints: "We don't like this." But that only solidifies the authorities even more. There could be a much better way of approaching the whole thing, a more intelligent way. You could say, "Maybe it's my problem, but personally I find that this water doesn't taste good." You and your friends could say, "We don't feel good about drinking this water." It could be very simple and straightforward. You don't have to go through the whole legal trip. You don't have to use the "lord of speech" approach of making public declarations of all kinds, "Freedom for all mankind!" or anything like that. Maybe you could even bring along your dog or your cat. I think the whole thing could be done very gently.

Obviously there are social problems, but the way to approach that is not as "I—a rightful political entity," or as "me—one of the important people in society." Democracy is built on the attitude that I speak out for myself, the invincible me. I speak for democracy. I would like to get my own rights, and I also speak for others' rights as well. Therefore, we

don't want to have this water. But that approach doesn't work. The point is that people's experience of themselves could be gathered together rather than just having a rally. That is what you do in sitting practice.

In an extreme case, if I happened to find myself in the central headquarters where they push the button that could blow up the planet, I would kill the person who was going to push the button for the bomb right away and without any hesitation. I would take delight in it! But that is slightly different from what we are talking about. In that case, you are dealing with the threshold of the power of society altogether. In this case, we are simply talking about how we can collectively smooth out this world, so that it could become an enlightened society. Creating an enlightened society requires general cultivation of that nature.

13

*Be grateful to everyone.**

This slogan also is dealing with *kündzop,* or conventional reality. That is to say, without this world we cannot attain enlightenment; there would be no journey. By rejecting the world we would be rejecting the ground and rejecting the path. All our past history and all our neurosis is related with others in some sense. All of our experiences are based on others, basically. As long as we have a sense of practice, some realization that we are treading on the path, every one of those little details that are seemingly obstacles to us becomes an essential part of the path. Without them we cannot attain anything at all—we have no feedback, we have nothing to work with, absolutely nothing to work with.

So in a sense, all the things taking place around our world, all the irritations and all the problems, are crucial. Without others we cannot attain enlightenment—in fact, we cannot even tread on the path. In other words, we could say that if there is no noise outside during our sitting meditation, we cannot develop mindfulness. If we do not have aches and pains in our body, we cannot attain mindfulness, we cannot

*A more literal translation of this slogan is "Contemplate the great kindness of everyone."

actually meditate. If everything were lovey-dovey and jellyfish-like, there would be nothing to work with. Everything would be completely blank. Because of all these textures around us, we are enriched. Therefore, we can sit and practice and meditate. We have a reference point—encouragement, discouragement, or whatever. Everything is related to the path.

The idea of this particular teaching is actually to give our blood and flesh to others. "If you want me, take me, possess me, kidnap me, control me—go ahead, do it. Take me. I'm at your service. You could bounce on me, shit on me, cut me into pieces, or anything you want. Without your help I would not have any way to work with my journey at all." That is a very, very powerful thing. In fact, one of the interesting sayings of Lang-ri Thangpa, one of the Kadampa teachers, was: "I realize that all mistakes belong to me and all virtues belong to others, so I cannot really blame anybody except myself."

There is a little phrase which might be good to memorize. In Tibet we used to stick it on our door handles and things like that. The saying goes: "Profit and victory to others; loss and defeat to myself." That sounds terribly self-flagellating if you look at it the wrong way. In particular, the popular idea of Catholicism is to blame everything on oneself as an ultimate guilt concept. But in this case, we are not talking about guilt or that we did something terribly wrong. It is seeing things as they are. By "profit and victory," we mean anything that encourages us to walk on the path of dharma—that is created by the world. Yet at the same time we are filled with loss and defeat all the time—that is ours. We are not supposed to sulk on that particular point, but we are supposed to take pride in that. It is a fantastic idea that we are actually, finally fearless persons—that profit is others' and loss is ours. That is great, fantastic! We may not find that to be so when it is early morning and we have just woken up and feel rather feeble; although at the end of the day, when we have had a few drinks and our belly is filled and we are relatively comfortable, we might feel that way. But fundamentally it is true.

These statements are not based on guilt or punishment, like the Jewish idea of *oy vey*. But it is actually true that a lot of things that we tend to blame others for are our own doing—otherwise we wouldn't get in trouble. How come somebody else doesn't get in trouble and we do get in trouble? What causes that? It must be something happening to us,

obviously. We can write our case history and employ our own lawyer to prove that we are right and somebody else is wrong—but that is also trouble we have to go through. It is all trouble, problems. And trying to prove our case history somehow doesn't work. In any case, hiring a lawyer to attain enlightenment is not done. It is not possible. Buddha did not have a lawyer himself.

The slogan "Be grateful to everyone" follows automatically once we drive all blames into one. We have a feeling that if others didn't exist to hassle us, we couldn't drive all blames into ourselves at all. All sentient beings, all the people in the world, or most of them, have a problem in dealing with "myself." Without others, we would have no chance at all to develop beyond ego. So the idea here is to feel grateful that others are presenting us with tremendous obstacles—even threats or challenges. The point is to appreciate that. Without them, we could not follow the path at all.

Walking on the path of the dharma is connected with dealing with our neurosis. But if there were no neuros-*ees*, we couldn't develop any neuros-*is*. Therefore, we should feel very grateful to such persons. They are actually the ones who are pushing us onto the path of dharma. I will tell you a little story about Atisha, who is the source of these teachings. Atisha was invited to teach in Tibet, and he had heard that the Tibetans were very kind, gentle, hospitable people. So he decided that he should take along with him one object of practice—his attendant, a Bengali servant who was very short-tempered. Since the Tibetans were so kind and good, Atisha took his servant along so that he could practice lojong on him. Interestingly enough, he said later on that he needn't have brought this person, as the Tibetans were not as good as he had heard.

If someone hurts you, you should be thankful to them for giving you the opportunity to practice. But you do not have to expose yourself to be hurt, that would be some sort of martyrdom. You don't have to ask to be hurt, but when you come up with such a situation, then all the things we discussed apply. It is not that you have to stage the whole thing. Instead, somebody will blame you and then you will think, "It is mine." You don't have to avoid such situations and you don't have to cultivate them. You just lead your life, being very sane, and you don't hurt anybody else. But if anybody happens to hurt you, then you know what to do. It is very simple. We are not talking about deliberately jump-

ing on a sword. That would be a misunderstanding. Instead you are making a close relationship with the person who is hurting you.

At a further level of development it may be possible to stop an attacker by force to prevent him from having the karma of having injured you. But that is a very high level of sympathy. For instance, there is a story about a Tibetan teacher who was ambushed by his enemies, who were going to kill him on his way to teaching a seminary. He pulled out his dagger and said, "This is the tooth of a tiger," and he stabbed the chief, killing him on the spot. Everybody was so shocked, they let him go. That is an entirely different approach. I think it would be too dangerous for us to go as far as that. As long as you know what you are doing, it is okay, but that sort of approach escalates the warfare.

"Loss and defeat" is not really pain in the fundamental sense, it is just a game. It is that you did not get what you wanted, so you feel somewhat irritated, the little things that go through our life always. It has nothing to do with real pain. We do not always get what we want and we are always frustrated with that. We are resentful toward something or somebody or even toward ourselves if we expend our money or if we run into somebody's car or anything of that nature. It is not really pain, it is just hassle.

This whole approach is dealing with all kinds of hassles and transmuting them and working with them as a workable journey toward enlightenment. We are not talking about fundamental pain. I think one of the problems we have, particularly in the Occidental mentality, is that we make too much of a big deal of the whole thing. We complicate the whole thing unnecessarily, and we have no idea how to play games properly. It is not a big deal, it is an exchange. You are finally putting your name on the dotted line. It is a lighthearted situation—including death. Keep that in mind. Make a slogan out of that. Whatever takes place, you do not take all that seriously. Whatever comes up, you do not regard as the ultimate, final problem, but as a temporary flare-up that comes and goes.

This obviously needs a lot of understanding and training. A person cannot practice this without preplanning the journey and having worked with his or her state of mind. There is also a need for some understanding of the shunyata experience, basically speaking. There is no ground at all to begin with, so anything that takes place in the groundlessness becomes workable. Those things are actually very powerful—they used to

be, anyway. When I was a teenager it really turned me on a great deal. It is so direct and very simple and helpful—particularly when you are facing hassles.

14

Seeing confusion as the four kayas
Is unsurpassable shunyata protection.

In the slogan "Seeing confusion as the four kayas / Is unsurpassable shunyata protection," the basic question is whom to protect, what to protect. All sorts of other questions are involved as well, but basically we are talking about having an understanding or realization of the way we perceive things as they are.

In perception, first there will be a sense of waiting or openness. There may be uncertainty as to how to perceive things, not knowing how to make a particular situation graspable. Then we have a clear idea of how to organize things. Thirdly, we begin to make a relationship between the two. And finally we have a total experience of the whole. That makes four states of mind that we go through, four stages of mind or mental process. These four processes are related with the four kayas: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya, and svabhavikakaya.

The dharmakaya nature of our reaction to the world is usually uncertain, bewildered. Strategies are not yet formed, planning is not completely organized—it is just a sense of basic openness. The nirmanakaya aspect is the second stage of this process. At this point there is some kind of clarity in which we have a basic grasp of the situation generally. And in order to make a link between the uncertainty or openness and the clarity, we need sambhogakaya, which bridges the gap between the two and joins them together. So the dharmakaya and the nirmanakaya are joined together by means of the sambhogakaya. According to this particular tradition, that is the realistic way of looking at things.[1]

Svabhavikakaya is understanding the whole thing, total panoramic experience. When we begin to flash our mind to an object, when we have a grasp of it, when we begin to realize some kind of link between the kayas—that totality is what is known as svabhavikakaya.

The svabhavikakaya is a general state of existence, and that state of mind also contains what is known as transcending birth, cessation, and dwelling. Transcending birth means that thought process does not come up. There is no such thing as the birth of a mind or the birth of a thought taking place in our state of being at all, there is just simply existing and opening. Transcending cessation means that no thoughts actually subside unless they are replaced or overlapped by something else. And transcending dwelling means that thoughts do not dwell anywhere, although there is some kind of occasional something. So the idea of svabhavikakaya is seeing beyond the birth, subsiding, and dwelling of the thought process.

The reason that the four kayas—dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya, and svabhavikakaya—become a great protection is that we begin to realize the way our mind functions, our state of being. We realize that whatever comes up in our mind is always subject to that flow, that particular case history, that nature. Sudden pain, sudden anger, sudden aggression, sudden passion—whatever might arise always follows the same procedure, so to speak, the same process. Everything is always in accordance with the four kayas. Although we might not regard our own mind as all that transcendent and enlightened or awake, its pattern is still that of the four kaya principles. So the nature of everything is nowness. Thoughts just emerge: you cannot watch their birth, they are just there. They die, they just [*Vidyadhara snaps fingers*]. They don't dwell, they just [*Vidyadhara snaps fingers again*]. The whole thing is a natural process.

This slogan might seem slightly obscure, but it has to do with the absolute bodhichitta concept of understanding your mind by studying and watching yourself and by practicing shamatha and vipashyana. By practicing those disciplines, you begin to realize that the essence of your mind is empty, that the nature of your mind is light and clear, and that the expression or manifestation of your mind is active. That realization can only come about when you are sitting on the cushion. Only on the cushion can you see that your mind has no origin. There is no place from which thoughts arise, as far as you can judge by looking at them. You also have no idea where your thoughts go. Thoughts just come and they just vanish, disappear. Furthermore, you also have no idea where your thoughts dwell—particularly when you have developed a basic sense of mindfulness and awareness.

As you continue to practice mindfulness and awareness, the seeming

confusion and chaos in your mind begin to seem absurd. You begin to realize that your thoughts have no real birthplace, no origin, they just pop up as dharmakaya. They are unborn. And your thoughts don't go anywhere, they are unceasing. Therefore, your mind is seen as sambhogakaya. And furthermore, no activities are really happening in your mind, so the notion that your mind can dwell on anything also begins to seem absurd, because there is nothing to dwell on. Therefore, your mind is seen as nirmanakaya. Putting the whole thing together, there is no birth, no cessation, and no acting or dwelling at all—therefore, your mind is seen as svabhavikakaya. The point is not to make your mind a blank. It is just that as a result of supermindfulness and superawareness, you begin to see that nothing is actually happening—although at the same time you think that lots of things are happening.

Realizing that the confusion and the chaos in your mind have no origin, no cessation, and nowhere to dwell is the best protection. Shunyata is the best protection because it cuts the solidity of your beliefs. "I have my solid thought" or "This is my grand thought" or "My thought is so cute" or "In my thoughts I visualize a grand whatever" or "The star men came down and talked to me" or "Genghis Khan is present in my mind" or "Jesus Christ himself manifested in my mind" or "I have thought of a tremendous scheme for how to build a city, or how to write a tremendous musical comedy, or how to conquer the world"—it could be anything, from that level down to "How am I going to earn my living after this?" or "What is the best way for me to sharpen my personality so that I will be visible in the world?" or "How I hate my problems!" All of those schemes and thoughts and ideas are empty! If you look behind their backs, it is like looking at a mask. If you look behind a mask, you see that it is hollow. There may be a few holes for the nostrils and the mouth—but if you look behind it, it doesn't look like a face anymore, it is just junk with holes in it. Realizing that is your best protection. You realize that you are no longer the greatest artist at all, that you are not any of your big ideas. You realize that you are just authoring absurd, nonexistent things. That is the best protection for cutting confusion.

This slogan is related with the idea of carrying everything onto the path at the absolute bodhichitta level. It is very tricky. There is some possibility that when you hear that if you just simply meditate on the four kayas, everything is going to be protected, you may think that your kid is going to be protected, your brothers and sisters, your property and

your motorcars. But this protection is not quite at that level; it is shunyata protection, which is that you no longer have anywhere to dwell—you are suspended in shunyata. It is a very clever way of approaching the whole thing. You are not talking about egolessness here, you are trying to work out your protection. But you might find yourself being egoless and realizing that there is nothing to protect. So your protection is groundlessness. It is a very clinical approach in some sense. There can be no germs around if you have no ground on which to collect germs.

The idea of the four kayas is not particularly tantric; it is mahayanist high thinking. The kayas appear in the third turning of the wheel of the dharma in the *Uttaratantra* of Maitreya[2] and in the *Diamond Sutra.*[3] So this is not particularly a tantric idea. But at the same time, it is tantric in some sense. If I may say so, the idea of dealing with döns and with the protectors is highly influenced by tantra. [See the next slogan, "Four practices are the best of methods."] The whole thing is based on mahayana principles, but there is an undercurrent of techniques that are borrowed from the vajrayana. So the understanding is presented from the mahayana viewpoint, but the techniques are tantric.

15

Four practices are the best of methods.

This slogan is a rather difficult one, actually, but it makes a lot of sense. It refers to special activities, or anecdotes, for how to go about your daily life, translated as "best of methods." These best methods consist of four categories: accumulating merit, laying down evil deeds, offering to the döns, and offering to the dharmapalas.

Accumulating Merit

The first application is accumulating merit, not in the sense that we are accumulating anything for our own ego trip, but from the point of view of trying to relate with what is sacred or holy. We are making a connection with sacred areas of reality: the very idea of the teachings, or dharma, and the existence of basic sanity, which is represented by works of art, images, statues, paintings, books, all kinds of symbols and all kinds

of colors. We associate ourselves with that kind of thing. Creating merit is working with such situations and putting in as much of our effort and energy as we can. A sense of veneration becomes very important.

The accumulation of merit is also based on complete trust in the three types of encouragement. These three are not slogans; they are lines of encouragement for the slogans, so to speak. The three lines of encouragement are:

> Grant your blessing if it is better for me to be sick.
> Grant your blessing if it is better for me to survive.
> Grant your blessing if it is better for me to be dead.

That is the ultimate idea of creating merit. That is to say, we cannot have a succession of merit completely filling the whole area absolutely. Before we beg, our begging bowl has to be emptied; otherwise nobody will give us anything. In order to receive something, there first has to be a sense of openness, giving, surrendering. It is not being concerned with yourself, it is simply letting things be. Whatever comes up, be grateful to it. It is not that you are not talking to anybody; instead it is like saying, "Let the rain fall," or "Let the earth shake." It is a magical word, simply. Something actually might happen when you do that, but you are not talking to anybody in particular. I don't know how I can say that linguistically: "Grant your blessings" or "Just let it happen."

Traditionally we create merit by creating statues and stupas and by making offerings to the sangha—donating our money and encouraging that kind of establishment. But we are not only surrendering our green energy. We are also trying to let go of our possessiveness altogether. For instance, if it is better for us to get sick, we let it be so. "Please let that be our blessing."

We might regard this approach as that of a very naive person who will go along with absolutely anything all the time. But in this case, the approach has to be an extremely intelligent one which lets us go ahead and open ourselves completely to the situation. That seems to be a very important point—that we cannot just have blind faith. We have to have the intelligent faith of letting go of our holding back. Holding back creates a kind of business mentality: "If I don't get this, then I have to sue the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha—metaphorically, realistically, or whatever. If I don't get my money's worth in return, then I have been

cheated." But in this case it is not so much tit for tat, but letting things be in their own way: "Whatever has happened, I would like to let go of this problem of holding back." It is very simple. It is extremely simple and realistic. That is precisely what is meant by creating or accumulating merit.

We cannot accumulate merit if we have a macho sense of pride and arrogance that we already have enough truth and virtue collected and now we are going to collect some more. The person who collects merit has to be humble and willing to give rather than being willing to collect. The more a person is willing to give, that much more effective, in some sense, is the accumulation of merit. That is why there are those three subslogans or reminders. We could actually call them *incantations*, that might be a better word. The slogans themselves are reminders; so these incantations are reminders for the reminders.

When we talk about merit, we are not talking about collecting something for your ego but about the basic twist of how to punish your ego. The logic is that you always want pleasure, but what you get is always pain. Why does that happen? It happens because the very act of seeking pleasure brings pain. You always get a bad deal—all the time. You get a bad deal because you started at the wrong end of the stick.

The point of this practice or application is that you have to sacrifice something rather than purely yearning for pleasure. You have to start at the right end of the stick from the very beginning. In order to do that, you have to refrain from evil actions and cultivate virtuous actions. In order to do that, you have to block out hope and fear altogether so you do not hope to gain anything from your practice and you are not particularly fearful of bad results.

Whatever happens, let it happen—you are not particularly looking for pleasure or pain. As the supplications that go along with this particular practice say: "If it is better for me to be dead, let me be dead; if it is better for me to be alive, let me be alive. If it is better for me to have pleasure, let me have pleasure; if it is better for me to have pain, let me have pain." It is a very direct approach, like diving into an ice-cold swimming pool in the middle of winter. If that is what is best for your constitution, go ahead and do it. It is the idea of having a direct link with reality, very simple, without any scheming at all. In particular, if there is any desire or any fear, you act in the opposite way: you jump into your fear and you refrain from your desire. It is the same approach as taking

on other people's pain and giving your pleasure to them. It should no longer be any surprise to you that we have such a strange way of dealing with the whole thing—but it usually works. We could almost say that it works 100 percent, but I'm not sure about 200 percent.

Laying Down Evil Deeds

The second of the four practices is laying down your evil deeds or neurotic crimes. As a result of accumulating merit, because you have learned to block out hope and fear altogether, you have developed a sense of gentleness and sanity. Having done so, the basic idea of laying down evil actions is psychological: you look back and you say, "Good heavens! I have been so stupid, and I didn't even realize it!" Such an attitude develops because you have already, at least somewhat, reached a certain level of sophistication. When you look back, you begin to see how sloppy and how embarrassing you have been. The reason you didn't notice it before is because of stupidity of some kind. So the point is to look back and realize what you have been doing and not make the same mistake all over again. I think that is quite straightforward.

We have translated the Tibetan term *dikpa* as "evil deeds" or "neurotic crimes" rather than "sin."[4] The word *sin* has all kinds of connotations. Particularly in the world of dead or living Christendom, and in theistic traditions generally, it is all-pervasive. *Dikpa* literally means "sin," but not in the same way as we refer to it in the Christian or Judaic traditions. "Neurotic crimes" has psychological implications rather than being purely ethical. When neurosis begins to surge up, you begin to go along with that process and you begin to do something funny. It may seem fantastic and far out, but it results in frivolity from that point of view. So neurosis is the backbone and frivolity is the activities.

The crime itself can end up as all kinds of crimes and destruction. What we are discussing is that basic principle of neurosis which creates all kinds of frivolous activities. We are confessing that. We are not talking about confession as going to a priest in a little box saying, "Father, I did a terrible thing yesterday, what should I do for that?" And the father would say, "Say this twenty times and we could let you go." Then you can come back next time saying the same thing, and he might say, "You have been bad in the past, so this time you should say it fifty times, your father is keeping a record of you." Everything depends on red tape from

that point of view. But in this case it is a more personal situation. In the Buddhist style of confession, shall we say, there is no church or particular building to go into to confess your evil deeds or neurotic crimes. There is a fourfold style of doing the whole thing, which is not so much confession as relieving the sin or the neurotic crimes.

The first step is getting tired of one's own neurosis. That is the first important thing. If you were not tired of doing the same thing again and again—all the time—if you were thriving on it, you probably would not have a chance to do anything with it. But once you begin to get tired of it, you say, "I shouldn't have done that" or "Here I go again" or "I should have known better" or "I don't feel so good." These are the sort of remarks you make, particularly when you wake up in the morning with a heavy hangover. That's good, that is the sign that you can actually confess your neurotic crimes. You come back and tell what you did last night or yesterday or what you've done previously. All these things are so embarrassing, it's terrible. You feel like not getting out of your bed. You don't want to go outside the door or face the world.

That real feeling of total embarrassment, that totally shitty feeling, for lack of a better word, that sense that your whole gut is rotten, is the first step. That sense of regret is not purely social regret—it is personal regret. And that shameful feeling begins to creep through our marrow into our bones and our hairs. The sunshine coming through the windows begins to mock us too. It is that kind of thing. That is the first step. And having it is regarded as a very healthy direction toward the second.

The second step is to refrain from that or to repent. "From this time onward I am not going to do it. I am going to hold off on what I have been doing." Repentance usually takes place in us when we begin to feel that we have done such a shitty job previously: "Do I still want to do it? Maybe it is fun, but it is still better not to do it." As we think more and more about it, it does not seem to be a hot idea to do it again. So there is a sense of refraining from it, preventing doing it again. That is the second step to confessing or relieving our evil deeds or neurotic crimes.

The third step is taking refuge. We realize that having done such things already, they are not particularly subject to one person's forgiveness. This is a difference from the Christian tradition, seemingly. Nobody can wipe out your neurosis by saying, "I forgive you." Quite possibly the person you forgave would not attack *you* again, but he or she might kill somebody else. From that point of view, unless the whole crime has

completely subsided, forgiving does not help. It not only does not help, it may even encourage you to do more sinning. From the Buddhist approach, the fact that a person has already wiped out your neurotic crimes, has created a good relationship with you, and understands and forgives you inspires you to commit further crimes. So in this case, forgiveness means that one has to give oneself up altogether. The criminal has to give up altogether rather than the crime being forgiven.

Actions alone are not particularly a big deal; the basic factors which a person puts into the act of committing a crime are more important. People have begun to realize this, even in the modern world. We have begun to realize that we have to reform people in the jails and give them further training so that they do not go back to their crimes. Often people simply get free board and lodging, and once their sentences are over they could have a good time because they have served their sentence, they are forgiven, and everything is fine. If they are hungry again and without any food, money, or shelter, they could come back. So the idea of reformation is very tricky. According to history, apparently Buddhists never had jails, not even Emperor Ashoka. He was the first person who denounced having jails.

The idea of taking refuge is completely surrendering. Complete surrendering is based on the notion that you have to give up the criminal rather than that the crime should be forgiven. That is the idea of taking refuge in the Buddha as the example, in the dharma as the path, and in the sangha as companionship—giving up oneself, giving up one's stronghold.

The fourth step is a further completing of that surrendering process. At this point a person is surrendering, giving, and opening completely. A person should actually engage in a supplication of preventing hope and fear. That is very important. "If hope is too hopeful, may I not be too hopeful. If fear is too fearful, may I not be too fearful." Transcending both hope and fear, you begin to develop a sense of confidence that you could go through the whole thing. That is the power of activity to relieve one's evil deeds.

So the first step is a sense of disgust with what you have done. The second one is refraining from it. The third is that, understanding that, you begin to take refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha—offering your neurosis. Having offered your neurosis or taken refuge, you begin to commit yourself as a traveler on the path rather than as any big deal

or moneymaker on the path. All those processes somehow connect together. And finally there is no hope and no fear: "If there is hope, let our hope subside; if there is any fear, may our fear subside as well." That is the fourth step.

Offering to the Döns

Number three is traditionally called "feeding the ghosts." It refers to those ghosts who create sickness, misfortune, or anything like that, called *döns* in Tibetan. The idea is to tell them, "I feel so grateful that you have caused me harm in the past, and I would like to invite you to come back again and again to do the same thing to me. I feel so grateful that you have woken me up from my sleepiness, my slothfulness. At least when I had my attack of flu, I felt much different from my usual laziness and stupidity, my usual wallowing in pleasure." You ask them to wake you up as much as they can. Whenever any difficult situation comes along, you begin to feel grateful. At this point you regard anything that can wake you up as best. You regard anything that provides you with the opportunity for mindfulness or awareness, anything that shocks you, as best, rather than always trying to ward off any problems.

Traditionally one offers the ghosts torma, or food. *Torma* is a Tibetan word meaning "offering cake." If you have watched a Tibetan ceremony, you may have seen funny little cakes carved out of butter and dough. Those are called torma. They represent the idea of a gift or token. A similar concept in the West is the birthday cake, which is designed and planned in a certain way, with artwork on it and completely decorated. So we give offerings to those who create harm to us, which literally means those who are creating an evil influence on us.

The first practice, the confession of sins, is just natural tiredness of one's continual neurosis. One's neurosis is not particularly a landmark, it is just a natural thing which comes up, not a big attack. But a dön is a big attack or sudden earth-shaking situation which makes you think twice. A sudden incident hits you and suddenly things begin to happen to you. So something remarkable is taking place. The first one is just sort of a camel's hump rather than a sheer drop. It is simply relating with ups and downs, pains. The second application talks about getting tired of your particular problems. You have a sense of your neurosis going on all the time. It is like somebody with a migraine headache: it keeps coming

up, again and again. You are tired of that. You are tired of doing the same things again and again. The third practice or application says that we should give torma to those who harm us, the döns.

Döns are very abrupt, very direct. Everything is going smoothly, and suddenly an attack takes place: your grandmother has disinherited you, or there is a shift of luck. Döns usually attack much more suddenly; they possess you immediately. *Possession* is actually the closest word for dön. Döns are equated with possession because they attack you suddenly and they attack you by surprise. Suddenly you are in a terribly bad mood even though everything is okay.

This subject is a very complicated one, actually. We are not just talking about trying to feed somebody who spooks us, those little fairies who might turn against us: "Let us feed them some little thingies and they might go away." It is connected with the whole Tibetan concept of dön, which comes from the Bön tradition[5] but also seems to be applicable to the Buddhist tradition. The word *dön* means a sense or experience of something existing around us that suddenly makes us unreasonably fearful, unreasonably angry and aggressive, unreasonably horny and passionate, or unreasonably mean. Situations of that kind occur to us throughout our life. There is some kind of flu or fever that goes on all the time in our life, that possesses us. Without any reason, we are suddenly terrified. Without any reason, we are so angry and uptight. Without any reason, we are so lustful. Without any reason, we are suddenly so proud. It is a neurotic attack of some kind, which is called a dön. If we approach that from an external point of view, certain phenomena make us do that. To extend that logic, we could say that such spirits exist outside us: "The ghost of Washington hit us, so we are inspired to run for the presidency," or whatever.

That feeling of some hidden neurosis which keeps popping up all the time is called dön. It happens to us all the time. Suddenly we break into tears, for absolutely no reason. We cry and cry and cry and break down completely. And at a certain point we would like to destroy the whole world and kick everybody out. We would like to destroy our house. If we have a wife or children, we could knock them out as well. We go to extremes, of course. And sometimes the dön doesn't go along with that. As we go along with what we have started, the dön doesn't want to be a complaint, so it pulls back. We go ahead with our fists extended in

midair on the way to our wife's eyes—and suddenly there is nobody to encourage us, so our hands just drop down.

Döns are like some kind of flu that takes us over and is usually unpredictable. It happens to us all the time, sometimes to a lesser extent and sometimes to a greater extent. The idea is to understand and realize that such things are taking place in us, that neurotic processes are beginning to pop up in us. We can be thankful for that. We could say that it is great that it takes place: "It is great that you actually snatched back the debt I owe you, that you confiscated the debt I owe you. Please come back and do the same thing again and again. Please come back and do so." We do not regard the whole thing as playing trick or treat, that if we give them enough, they are going to go away—they come back again.

And we should invite them back, the ups and downs of those sudden attacks of neurosis. It is quite dangerous: wives might be afraid of getting black eyes again and again, and husbands might have fears of being unable to enter their home and have a good dinner. But it is still important to invite them again and again, to realize their possibilities. We are not going to get rid of them. We are going to have to acknowledge that and be thankful for what has happened. Usually such an upsurge coincides with a physical weakness of some kind, as if we were just about to catch the flu or a cold.

Sometimes you are careless. You don't eat the right food and you go out without a coat and you catch cold. Or you do not watch your step and you slip and break your disk or you break your rib. Whenever there is a little gap, döns could slip in, in the same way that we catch cold. Things always happen that way. You might have complete control of the whole thing, but on the other hand, the problems have complete control also, which creates a loss of mindfulness. So a lot of döns can attack you. The idea is that if you are completely working with mindfulness twenty-four hours a day, you do not have döns, you do not have a flu, you do not have a cold. But once you are not at that level, you have all kinds of things happening. You have to face that fact. It could be said that at the level of mindfulness, such problems can be avoided absolutely. That is an advertisement for being mindful.

You welcome such attacks when you lose your mindfulness. They are reminders and you are grateful because they tell you how much you are being unmindful. They are always welcome: "Don't go, please come back." But at the same time, you continue with your mindfulness. It is

the same as working with your teacher. You don't try to avoid the teacher all the time. If you are okay, you will always have some kind of reference point to the teacher. But at some point the teacher might shout at you, "Boo!" and you still have to work with it. The reason why you welcome them is that their presence means something to you in terms of your direction, what's going on.

Usually what happens with us is that we have a schedule and everything is going along smoothly and ideally, hunky-dory, everything is fine and nothing is problematic—and one day we are suddenly uptight, one day we are so down. Everything is smooth and ordinary, and then there are those ups and downs, those little puncturing situations in our lives. Little leaks, little upsurges take place all the time. The idea is to feed those forces with torma.

If we are trying to do that literally, probably we will still have the same fits all the time. The idea of offering torma is somewhat symbolic in this case. I don't think we can get rid of our ups and downs by giving them some little Tibetan offerings. That would be far-fetched. Forgive me, but that is true, actually. It needs more of a gesture than that. If we have a real feeling about offering something which represents our existence and put it out as an expression or demonstration of our opening and giving up, that could be okay. But that comes at a higher level. In particular, people in this environment are not trained in that kind of ritualistic world, so people have very little feeling about such things. Ritualism becomes more a superstition than a sacred ceremony. That has become problematic. Few people have experienced anything of that nature and had it become meaningful. It means that we actually have to commit ourselves rather than just having somebody sprinkling water on us, trying to make us feel good and happy. We have not experienced the depth of ritualism to the extent that we could actually put out cakes for the döns so that they will not attack us again. In order to do that we need further suitability of our own state of being as well as a sense of immense sanity. So I would not like to suggest that you put out substitute doggie bags for anybody—although it might be good for the local dogs and cats.

Offering to the Dharmapalas

Number four is asking the dharmapalas, or "protectors of the teachings," to help you in your practice. This is not quite the same as praying to

your patron saint, asking him to make sure you can cross the river safely. Let me just give you a very ordinary, basic idea of this. You have your root guru, your teacher, who guides you and blesses you, so that you could become a worthy student. At a lower level, you have protectors of the teachings, who will push you back to your discipline if you stray into any problems. They are sort of like shepherds: if one sheep decides to run away, the shepherd drives it back into the corral. You know that if you stray, the protectors will teach you how to come back. They will give you all sorts of messages. For instance, when you are in the middle of a tremendous fit of anger and aggression and you have become a completely nondharmic person, you might slam the door and catch your finger in it. That teaches you something. It is the principle of corraling you back to the world where you belong. If you have the slightest temptation to step out of the dharmic world, the protectors will herd you back—*hurl* you back—to that world. That is the meaning of asking the dharmapalas, or the protectors, to help you in your practice.

The dharmapalas represent our basic awareness, which is not so much absorbed in the meditative state of being but which takes place or takes care of us during the postmeditation experience. That is why traditionally we have chanting taking place toward the end of the day, when it is time to go to sleep or eat dinner, and when it is time to wake up in the morning. The idea is that from morning to evening, our life is controlled or secured purely by practice and learning all the time. So our life is sacred.

Toward the end of our day, quite possibly we have possibilities of taking a break from sacred activity and meditative activity. At that time, quite possibly all kinds of neurosis beyond measure could attack us. So that is the most dangerous time. The darkness is connected with evil in some sense, not as the Christian concept of Satan, particularly, but evil as some kind of hidden neurosis which might be indulged and which thereby might create obstacles to realization. Moreover, our practice of meditation may be relaxed—so in order not to create a complete break from sitting practice or discipline, in order to continue, we ask these protectors of the dharma to work with us. They are no more than ourselves. They are our expression of intelligence or of mind, which happens constantly. And their particular job is to destroy any kind of violence or confusion which takes place in us.

Usually confusion is connected with aggression a great deal. It is adharma, or anti-dharma. Dharma does not have a sense of aggression; it is just simple truth. But truth can be diverted or challenged or relocated by all kinds of conceptual ideas. Truth can be cut into pieces by one's own individual aggression. There is also the possibility that our individual aggression is regarded not as dirty aggression but as very polite aggression, smeared with honey and milk. Such aggression is known as an ego trip, and it needs to be cut through.

According to this particular application, it is very necessary to work with that kind of energy. To do so we have developed all kinds of chants here in the West as well as in Tibet. We have whole huge sadhanas of various mahakalas whose job it is to cut through bloodthirsty subconscious gossip which does not allow any sense of openness and simplicity and peace or gentleness. The idea is to relate with gentleness at this point. And in order to bring gentleness into effect, so to speak, we have to cut through aggression at the same time. Otherwise, there would be no gentleness. Traditional chants represent the idea that anybody who has violated the gentleness has to be cut through by means of gentleness. When gentleness becomes so harsh, it could become very powerful and cut right through. By cutting through, it creates further gentleness. It is like when a doctor says that it is not going to hurt you, it is just going to be a little prick. One little prick and you are cured. It is that kind of idea.

A further understanding of the mahakalas or the dharmapalas that we are inviting is connected with the presentation of the teachings and how it can be handled properly in an individual's mind. That is one of our biggest concerns—or at least *my* biggest concern. If the teachings are not properly presented or are presented in the wrong way or in a somewhat cowardly way—if true teaching has not been presented, we all could be struck down by that. So we are asking the protectors to give us help and feedback through teachings, through bankruptcies, through organizational mishaps, through being millionaires, or through work in general. It is all included. We are taking a lot of chances here. We are not physically taking chances as much as we are taking spiritual chances. That seems to be the basic point of what we are doing. And giving offerings to the dharmapalas is what we have been told to do according to this commentary of Jamgön Kongtrül.

16

Whatever you meet unexpectedly, join with meditation.

There are three sets of slogans connected with how to carry everyday occurrences into your practice on the path. The first set is connected with relative bodhichitta and includes the slogans "Drive all blames into one" and "Be grateful to everyone." The second set is connected with absolute bodhichitta and comprises the slogan "Seeing confusion as the four kayas / Is unsurpassable shunyata protection." The third set is the special activities connected with following the path. The headline slogan for that is "Four practices are the best of methods." And having discussed those three categories, there is a tail end, which is this slogan: "Whatever you meet unexpectedly, join with meditation." It is not necessarily the least, but it is the last. It is the last slogan of the third point of mind training, which is concerned with bringing your experience onto the path properly, and it is actually a very interesting one.

In this slogan, the word *join* has the feeling of putting together butter and bread. You put together or join situations with meditation, or with shamatha-vipashyana. The idea is that whatever comes up is not a sudden threat or an encouragement or any of that bullshit. Instead it simply goes along with one's discipline, one's awareness of compassion. If somebody hits you in the face, that's fine. Or if somebody decides to steal your bottle of Coke, that's fine too. This is somewhat naive, in a way, but at the same time it is very powerful.

Generally speaking, Western audiences have a problem with this kind of thing. It sounds love-and-lighty, like the hippie ethic in which "Everything is going to be okay. Everybody is everybody's property, everything is everybody's property. You can share anything with anybody. Don't lay ego trips on things." But this is something more than that. It is not love-and-light. It is simply to be open and precise and to know your territory at the same time. You are going to relate with your own neurosis rather than expanding that neurosis to others.

"Whatever you meet" could be either a pleasurable or a painful situation—but it always comes in the form of a surprise. You think that you have settled your affairs properly: you have your little apartment and you are settled in New York City; your friends come around, and every-

thing is okay; business is fine. Suddenly, out of nowhere, you realize that you have run out of money! Or, for that matter, your boyfriend or your girlfriend is giving you up. Or the floor of your apartment is falling down. Even simple situations could come as quite a surprise: you are in the middle of peaceful, calm sitting practice, everything is fine—and then somebody says, "Fuck you!" An insult out of nowhere. On the other hand, maybe somebody says, "I think you're a fantastic person," or you suddenly inherit a million dollars just as you are fixing up your apartment which is falling apart. The surprise could go both ways.

"Whatever you meet" refers to any sudden occurrence like that. That is why the slogan says that whatever you meet, any situation you come across, should be joined immediately with meditation. Whatever shakes you should without delay, right away, be incorporated into the path. By the practice of shamatha-vipashyana, seeming obstacles can be accommodated on the spot through the sudden spark of awareness. The idea is not to react right away to either painful or pleasurable situations. Instead, once more, you should reflect on the exchange of sending and taking, or tonglen discipline. If you inherit a million dollars, you give it away, saying, "This is not for me. It belongs to all sentient beings." If you are being sued for a million dollars, you say, "I will take the blame, and whatever positive comes out of this belongs to all sentient beings."

Obviously, there might be a problem when you first hear the good news or the bad news. At that point you go, "Aaah!" [*Vidyadhara gasps.*] That *aaah!* is some sort of ultimate bodhichitta. But after that, you need to cultivate relative bodhichitta in order to make the whole thing pragmatic. Therefore, you practice the sending and taking of whatever is necessary. The important point is that when you take, you take the worst; and when you give, you give the best. So don't take any credit—unless you have been blamed. "I have been blamed for stealing all the shoes, and I take the credit!"

In some sense, when you begin to settle down to that kind of practice, to that level of being decent and good, you begin to feel very comfortable and relaxed in your world. It actually takes away your anxiety altogether, because you don't have to pretend at all. You have a general sense that you don't have to be defensive and you don't have to powerfully attack others anymore. There is so much accommodation taking place in you. And out of that comes a kind of power: what you say be-

gins to make sense to others. The whole thing works so wonderfully. It does not have to become martyrdom. It works very beautifully.

That is the end of our discussion of the discipline of carrying whatever occurs in our life onto the path, which is connected with patience and nonaggression.

POINT FOUR

Showing the Utilization of Practice in One's Whole Life

Point Four and the Paramita of Exertion

The fourth point of the seven points of mind training is connected with the paramita of exertion. Exertion basically means being free from laziness. When we use the word *lazy*, we are talking about a general lack of mindfulness and a lack of joy in discipline. When your mind is mixed with dharma, when you have already become a dharmic person, then the connection has already been made. Therefore, you have no problem dealing with laziness. But if you have not made that connection, there might be some problems.

We could discuss exertion in terms of developing joy and appreciation for what you are doing. It is like taking a holiday trip: you are very inspired to wake up in the morning because you are expecting to have a tremendous experience. Exertion is like the minute before you wake up on a holiday trip: you have some sense of trusting that you are going to have a good time, but at the same time you have to put your effort into it. So exertion is some kind of celebration and joy, which is free from laziness.

It has been said in the scriptures that without exertion you cannot journey on the path at all. We have also said that without the legs of discipline you cannot walk on the path—but even if you have those legs,

if you don't have exertion, you can't take any steps. Exertion involves a sense of pushing yourself step by step, little by little. You are actually connecting yourself to the path as you are walking on it. Nevertheless, you are also experiencing some sense of resistance. But that resistance could be overcome by overcoming laziness, by ceasing to dwell in the entertainment of your subconscious gossip, discursive thoughts, and emotionalism of all kinds.

The fourth point of mind training deals with completing your training in your life altogether, from the living situation you are in now until your death. So we are discussing what you can do while you are alive and when you are dying. These two slogans are instructions on how to lead your life.

17

Practice the five strengths,
The condensed heart instructions.

We have five types of energizing factors, or five strengths, so that we can practice our bodhisattva discipline throughout our whole life: strong determination, familiarization, seed of virtue, reproach, and aspiration.

Strong Determination

Number one is strong determination. You are determined to maintain twofold bodhichitta. The practitioner should always have the attitude of maintaining bodhichitta—for this lifetime, this year, this month, this day. Strong determination means not wasting your time. It is also making it a point that you and the practice are one. Practice is your way of strengthening yourself. Sometimes when you get up in the morning, particularly if you have had a late night or you have been partying, you feel very feeble, somewhat uncertain. Quite possibly you wake up with a hangover, feeling very guilty. You wonder whether you were foolish the night before, whether you did absurd things. You wonder what other people think of you and begin to be afraid that they might have lost their

respect for you or that they might have confirmed your feebleness. You do a lot of worrying in that kind of situation.

The idea of the first strength is that as soon as you open your eyes and look out the window, as soon as you wake up, you reaffirm your strong determination to continue with your bodhichitta practice. And you do the same thing when you lie down on your bed at the end of the day, as you reflect back on your day's work, its problems, its frustrations, its pleasures, and all the good and bad things that happened. As you are dozing off, you think with strong determination that as soon as you wake up in the morning you are going to maintain your practice with continual exertion, which means joy. So you have some sense of looking forward to tomorrow, an attitude of looking forward to your day when you wake up in the morning.

Strong determination is connected with developing an attitude toward your practice that is almost like falling completely in love. You would like to go to bed with your lover; you long for it. You would like to wake up with your lover; you long for that too. You have a sense of appreciation and joy; therefore, your practice does not become torture or torment, it does not become a cage. Instead, your practice becomes a way of cheering yourself up constantly. Your practice might require a certain amount of exertion, a certain amount of pushing yourself, but you are well connected, so you are pleased to wake up in the morning and you are pleased to go to bed at night. Even your sleep becomes worthwhile; you sleep in a good frame of mind. The idea is one of waking up basic goodness, the alaya principle, and realizing that you are in the right spot, the right practice. So there is a sense of joy in strong determination, which is the first strength.

Familiarization

The second strength is known as familiarization. Because you have already developed strong determination, everything becomes a natural process. Even if you sometimes are mindless, even if you lose your concentration or your awareness, situations will remind you to go back to your practice. This is a process of familiarization in which your dharmic subconscious gossip has begun to become more powerful than your ordinary subconscious gossip. Bodhichitta has become familiar ground in

whatever you do—whether vice, virtue, or in between. So you are getting used to bodhichitta as an ongoing realization.

Again, this process is analogous to falling in love. When somebody mentions your lover's name, you feel both pain and pleasure. You feel turned on to that person's name and to anything associated with him or her. In the same way, the natural tendency of mindfulness-awareness, when the concept of egolessness has already evolved in your mind, is to flash on to dharma. You familiarize yourself with it. In other words, you no longer regard dharma as a foreign entity, but you begin to realize that dharma is a household thought, a household word, and a household activity. Each time you uncork your bottle of wine or unpop your Coca-Cola can or pour yourself a glass of water—whatever you do becomes a reminder. You cannot get rid of it; it becomes a natural situation.

So you learn to live with your sanity. That is very hard for many people at the beginning, but once you begin to realize that sanity is part of your being, there shouldn't be any problem. Of course, occasionally you want to take a break. You want to run away and take a vacation from your sanity. You want to do something else. However, your basic strength begins to become more powerful, so that your basic wickedness or insanity is changed into mindfulness and realization and familiarity with wakefulness.

Seed of Virtue

Number three is known as the seed of virtue. You have tremendous yearning all the time, so you do not take a rest from your wakefulness. It means not taking a break from your practice, basically speaking, but continuing on—not being content with what you are doing and not taking a break. You do not feel that you have had enough of it or that you have to do something else instead.

At that point, your neurosis about individual freedom and human rights might come up. You might begin to think, "I have a right to do anything I want, and I want to dive to the bottom of hell. I love it! I like it!" That kind of reactionism could happen. But you should pull yourself back up from the bottom of hell—for your own sake. You should realize that you cannot just give in to the little claustrophobia of your own sanity. In this case, virtue means that your body, speech, and mind are all dedicated to propagating bodhichitta in yourself.

Reproach

Number four is reproach, reproaching your ego. It is revulsion with samsara. Whenever any ego-centered thought occurs, you should think, "It is because of such clinging to ego that I wander in samsara and suffer endless pain. Since ego-clinging is the source of pain, if I try to maintain ego, there can be no happiness. Therefore, I must try to tame ego as much as I can." If you even want to talk to yourself, you should talk in this way. In fact, sometimes talking to yourself is very highly recommended, but it obviously depends on what you talk to yourself about. In this case, you are encouraged to say to your ego, "You have created tremendous trouble for me, and I don't like you. You have caused me so much trouble by making me wander in the lower realms of samsara. I have no desire at all to hang around with you. I'm going to destroy you. This 'you'—who are you, anyway? Go away! I don't like you."

Talking to your ego, reproaching yourself in that way, is very helpful. It is worth taking a shower and talking to yourself that way. It is worth sitting on the toilet seat and talking to yourself in that way. It would be a very good thing for you to do when you are driving. Instead of turning on the rock-punk, just turn on your reproach to your ego instead and talk to yourself. If you are being accompanied by somebody you might feel embarrassed, but you can still whisper to yourself. That is the best way to become an eccentric bodhisattva.

Aspiration

Number five is aspiration. The practitioner should end each session of meditation practice with the wish [1] to save all sentient beings—by himself, single-handedly; [2] not to forget twofold bodhichitta, even in his or her dreams; and [3] to apply bodhichitta in spite of whatever chaos and obstacles may arise. Because you have experienced joy and celebration in your practice, it does not feel like a burden to you. Therefore, you aspire further and further. You would like to attain enlightenment. You would like to free yourself from neurosis. You would also like to serve all "mother sentient beings"[1] throughout all times, all situations, at any moment. You are willing to become a rock or a bridge or a highway. You are willing to serve any worthy cause that will help the rest of the world. This is the same basic kind of aspiration as in taking the bodhi-

sattva vow. It is also general instruction on becoming a very pliable person, so that the rest of the world can use you as a working basis for their enjoyment of sanity.

18

The mahayana instruction for ejection of consciousness at death Is the five strengths: how you conduct yourself is important.

The second slogan of the fourth point of mind training is dealing with the future—our death. The question of death is very important. Realizing the truth of suffering and impermanence is a very important first step in realizing the Buddha's teaching altogether. All of us will die sooner or later. Some of us will die very soon and some of us might die somewhat later, but that is not particularly a reason for relaxing.

I would like to discuss the idea of making friends with our death. According to the tradition of ego-oriented culture, death is seen as a defeat and as an insult. Theistic disciplines try to teach us to develop a sense of eternity. But the basic Buddhist tradition, particularly the mahayana, teaches us that death is a deliberate act. Because we have been born, we have to die. That is a very obvious and sensible thing to say. But beyond that, we can make friends with our death and see how we can die as we are.

People usually try to ignore their death completely. If you say to somebody, "Do you realize that you could die tomorrow?" that person will say, "Don't be silly! I'm okay." That attitude is an attempt to avoid the fundamental ugliness existing in us. But death need not be regarded as the ultimate ugly situation that happens to us; instead it can be regarded as a way of extending ourselves into the next life. In this case, death is seen as an invitation to allow this thing we cherish so very much, called our body, to perish. We shave and we take showers and baths and we clothe ourselves quite beautifully, or somewhat beautifully. On the whole, we try to take very good care of this pet called our

body. It is like having a little puppy—we don't want our pet to die. But this little pet called our body might leave us sooner or later—*will* leave us sooner or later.

So to begin with, we have to realize that anything could happen to any one of us. We could be very healthy—but we might not die from ill health, we could die from an accident. We could die from sickness, from terminal diseases of all kinds, and sometimes we die without any reason at all. Although we have no external or internal problems—we just suddenly perish. We run completely out of breath and drop dead on the spot. So the point is to familiarize ourselves completely with our own death.

You want to live so much, and in order to live you can't do this and you can't do that. You cannot even sit on a zafu [meditation cushion] properly because your fear of death is so strong that you think the circulation in your legs might be cut off. You are so afraid to die that any attack that comes to you, even a little splinter in your finger, means death. So this instruction on how to die is not necessarily only about how to die when your death comes to you, but it is also a question of having to realize that death is always there.

One of the Kadam teachers who did these practices always put his drinking cup upside down on his table when he went to bed. Traditionally that means you are not going to be at home. You put your cup upside down so it won't get dusty. In that way you keep it clean and pure, so that somebody else can use it. The point is that the teacher always thought he might die that night; therefore he turned his cup upside down. You might think that is rather an eccentric way of going about things, but still, you should think twice or thrice when you say good night to somebody. You don't know whether or not you are going to see him or her tomorrow. That is a somewhat grim approach, if you view death as a disaster. But if you say good night nicely to somebody, that is a nice way to get out of your life, your body. It is a very humorous way of ending your life. There is a glory and humor in it. You don't need to die filled with remorse; you could die happily.

Like the last, this slogan is connected with the paramita of exertion. Exertion is a sense of joy in your practice. If you have practiced as much as you can in this life and are about to die, then if somebody says, "Look here, it is going to be very difficult for you to go beyond; may I pull the

plug for you?" you should have learned to be able to say, "Yes, of course" and "Have a nice time." Plug pulled out.

After all, death is not that grim. It's just that we are actually embarrassed talking about it. Nowadays people have no problem talking about sex, or going to porno movies, but they have difficulty dealing with death. We are so embarrassed. It is a big deal to us, yet we have never actually wanted to reflect on death. We disregard the whole thing. We prefer to celebrate life rather than to prepare for death, or even to celebrate death.

In Shambhala terms, refusing to relate with death is connected with what is called setting-sun logic. The whole philosophy of setting sun is to prevent the message of death altogether. It is about how to beautify ourselves, our bodies, so that we could become living corpses. The idea of a living corpse is contradictory in some sense, but it makes sense in terms of setting-sun vision: if we don't want to die, our corpse has to live a long time; it has to become a living corpse.

Unlike that logic, or the many points of view like that, this slogan tells us that it is important for us to realize that death is an important part of our practice, since we are all going to die and since we are all going to relate with our death anyway. It is about how to die from the basic point of view of our own practice.

The instruction for how to die in mahayana is the five strengths. So we have the five strengths, or the five powers, once again. Because these practices are very simple, and because this is the same list we just discussed, we don't have to go into them in great detail. Applying the five strengths in this connection is very simple and straightforward.

Strong determination, number one, is connected with taking a very strong stand: "I will maintain my basic egolessness, my basic sanity, even in my death." You should concentrate on twofold bodhichitta, repeating to yourself, "Before death and during the bardo, in all my births may I not be separated from twofold bodhichitta."

Familiarization is developing a general sense of mindfulness and awareness so that you do not panic because you are dying. You should develop the strength of familiarization, reminding yourself repeatedly of twofold bodhichitta.

The *seed of virtue* is connected with not resting, not taking any kind of break from your fear of death. It also has to do with overcoming your attachment to your belongings.

Reproach means realizing that this so-called ego does not actually exist. Therefore, you can say, "What am I afraid of, anyway? Go away, ego." Recognizing that all problems come from ego, all death is caused by ego, you develop revulsion for ego and vow to overcome it.

And the last one, *aspiration*, is realizing that you have tremendous strength and desire to continue and to open yourself up. Therefore, you have nothing to regret when you die. You have already accomplished everything that you can accomplish. You have done everything: you have become a good practitioner and developed your basic practice completely; you have realized the meaning of shamatha and vipashyana, and you have realized the meaning of bodhichitta. If possible you should practice the sevenfold service, or puja.[2] But if you cannot do that, you should think: "Through all my lives may I practice the precious bodhichitta. May I meet a guru who will teach me that. Please, three jewels, bless me so that I may do that."

Beyond all that, there is an interesting twist. The ultimate instruction on death is simply to try to rest your mind in the nature of ultimate bodhichitta. That is to say, you rest your mind in the nature of alaya and try to pass your breath in that way until you are actually dead.

POINT FIVE

Evaluation of Mind Training

POINT FIVE AND THE PARAMITA OF MEDITATION

The fifth category of mind training is connected with the paramita of meditation. The idea of the paramita of meditation is basically that you are beginning to catch some possibility of the fever of knowledge, or prajna, already. Therefore, you begin to develop a tremendous sense of awareness and mindfulness. It has been said that the practice of meditation, that kind of mindfulness and awareness, is like protecting yourself from the lethal fangs of wild animals. These wild animals are related to the kleshas, the neurosis we experience. If there is not the mindfulness and awareness practice of the paramita of meditation, then we have no way of protecting ourselves from those attacks, and we also have no facilities to teach others or to work for the liberation of other sentient beings. That particular concept of meditation permeates this next section of lojong.

19

All dharma agrees at one point.

In this case, dharma has nothing to do with the philosophical term *dharma*, or "things as they are"; *dharma* here simply means "teachings."

We could say that all teachings are basically a way of subjugating or shedding our ego. And depending on how much the lesson of the subjugation of ego is taking hold in us, that much reality is presented to us. All dharmas that have been taught are connected with that. There is no other dharma. No other teachings exist, particularly in the teachings of Buddha.

In this particular journey the practitioner can be put on a scale, and his or her commitment can be measured. It is like the scale of justice: if your ego is very heavy, you go down; if your ego is light, you go up. So giving up our personal project of ego-aggrandizement and attaining the impersonal project of enlightenment depends on how heavy-handed or how open you are.

Whether teachings are hinayana or mahayana, they all agree. The purpose of all of them is simply to overcome ego. Otherwise, there is no purpose at all. Whatever sutras, scriptures, or commentaries on the teachings of Buddhism you read, they should all connect with your being and be understood as ways of taming your ego. This is one of the main differences between theism and nontheism. Theistic traditions tend to build up an individual substance of some kind, so that you can then step out and do your own version of so-called bodhisattvic actions. But in the nontheistic Buddhist tradition, we talk in terms of having no being, no characteristics of egohood, and therefore being able to perform a much broader version of bodhisattva activity altogether.

The hinayana version of taming ego is to cut through sloppiness and wandering mind by the application of shamatha discipline, or mindfulness. Shamatha practice cuts through the fundamental mechanism of ego, which is that ego has to maintain itself by providing lots of subconscious gossip and discursive thoughts. Beyond that, the vipashyana principle of awareness also allows us to cut through our ego. Being aware of the whole environment and bringing that into our basic discipline allows us to become less self-centered and more in contact with the world around us, so there is less reference point to me- and my-ness.

In the mahayana, when we begin to realize the bodhisattva principle through practicing bodhichitta, our concern is more with warmth and skillfulness. We realize we have nothing to hang on to in ourselves, so we can give away each time. The basis of such compassion is nonterritoriality, non-ego, no ego *at all.* If you have that, then you have compassion. Then further warmth and workability and gentleness take place as

well. "All dharma agrees at one point" means that if there is no ego-clinging, then all dharmas are one, all teachings are one. That is compassion.

In order to have an affectionate attitude to somebody else, you have to be without ground to begin with. Otherwise you become an egomaniac, trying to attract people out of your seduction and passion alone, or your arrogance. Compassion develops from shunyata, or nonground, because you have nothing to hold on to, nothing to work *with*, no project, no personal gain, no ulterior motives. Therefore, whatever you do is a clean job, so to speak. So compassion and shunyata work together. It is like sunning yourself at the beach: for one thing you have a beautiful view of the sea and ocean and sky and everything, and there is also sunlight and heat and the ocean coming toward you.

In the hinayana, our ego begins to get a haircut; its beard is shaved. In the mahayana, the limbs of ego are cut, so there are no longer any arms and legs. We even begin to open up the torso of ego. By developing ultimate bodhichitta, we take away the heart so that nothing exists at all. Then we try to utilize the leftover mess of cut-off arms and legs and heads and hearts, along with lots of blood. Applying the bodhisattva approach, we make use of them, we don't throw them away. We don't want to pollute our world with lots of leftover egos. Instead we bring them onto the path of dharma by examining them and making use of them. So whatever happens in your life becomes a way of measuring your progress on the path—how much you have been able to shed your limbs, your torso, and your heart. That is why this slogan goes along with another saying of the Kadam teachers, which is "The shedding of ego is the scale that measures the practitioner." If you have more ego, you will be heavier on that scale; if you have less ego, you will be lighter. That is the measure of how much meditation and awareness have developed, and how much mindlessness has been overcome.

20

Of the two witnesses, hold the principal one.

In any situation there are two witnesses: other people's view of you and your own view of yourself. Of those, the principal witness is your own

insight. You should not just go along with other people's opinion of you. The practice of this slogan is always to be true to yourself. Usually when you do something, you would like to get some kind of feedback from your world. You have your own opinions of how well you have done, and you also have other people's opinions of how well you have done. Usually you keep your own opinion of yourself to yourself. First you have your own opinions about something, and then you begin to branch out and ask somebody else, "Was that all right? How do you think I'm doing?" That is one of the traditional questions that comes up in meetings between teacher and student.

In many cases, people are very impressed by you because you look fit and you are cheerful a great deal and you seem to know what you are doing. A lot of compliments take place. On the other hand, a lot of criticism could come to you from others who do not properly and fully know what is actually happening within you. This slogan says that of the two witnesses, hold the principal one as the actual, authentic one. That authentic witness is you.

You are the only person who knows yourself. You are the only person who has been with yourself since you were born. And even before that, you carried your own great baggage of karma with you. You decided to enter the womb of somebody or other; you were born in somebody's stomach and you came out of it and you still carry your baggage along with you. You feel your own pain and pleasure and everything. You are the one who experienced your infancy, the pain and pleasure of it; you have gone through your teenagehood, the pain and pleasure of it; you are the one experiencing your adulthood, the pain and pleasure of it. You are beginning to experience your middle-age years, the pain and pleasure of it; and finally, you will experience getting old and dying, the pain and pleasure of it. You have never been away from yourself for even a minute. You know yourself so well. Therefore, you are the best judge of yourself. You know how naughty you are, you know how you try to be sensible, and you know how you sometimes try to sneak things in.

Usually "I" is talking to "am." "Am I to do this? Am I to do something naughty? If I do, nobody will know." Only *we* know. We could do it and we might get away with it. There are lots of tricks or projects you and yourself always do together, hoping that nobody will actually find out. If you had to lay the whole thing out in the open, it would be so embarrassing. You would feel so strange. On the other hand, of course,

there is the other possibility. You could try to be very good so that somebody would be so impressed with you and with how much effort you put into yourself. You might try to be a good boy or a good girl. But if you have to spell the whole thing out, nobody will actually believe how good you are trying to be. People would think it was just a joke.

Only you really know yourself. You know at every moment. You know the way you do things: the way you brush your teeth, the way you comb your hair, the way you take your shower, the way you put on your clothes, the way you talk to somebody else, the way you eat, even if you are not terribly hungry. During all of those things, "I" and "am" are still carrying on a conversation about everything else. So there are a lot of unsaid things happening to you all the time. Therefore, the principal witness, or the principal judge, is yourself. The judgment of how you are progressing in your lojong practice is yours.

You know best about yourself, so you should work with yourself constantly. This is based on trusting your intelligence rather than trusting yourself, which could be very selfish. It is trusting your intelligence by knowing who you are and what you are. You know yourself so well, therefore any deception could be cut through. If someone congratulates or compliments you, they may not know your entire existence. So you should come back to your own judgment, to your own sense of your expressions and the tricks you play on others and on yourself. That is not self-centered; it is self-inspired from the point of view of the nonexistence of ego. You just witness what you are. You are simply witnessing and evaluating the merit, rather than going back over it in a Jungian or Freudian way.

21

Always maintain only a joyful mind.

The point of this slogan is continuously to maintain joyful satisfaction. That means that every mishap is good, because it is encouragement for you to practice the dharma. Other people's mishaps are good also: you should share them and bring them into yourself as the continuity of their practice or discipline. So you should include that also. It is very nice to feel that way, actually.

For myself, there is a sense of actual joy. You feel so good and so high. I suppose I was converted into Buddhism. Although I was not sticking bumper stickers on my car saying, "Jesus saved me," I was doing that mentally. Mentally I was putting on bumper stickers saying, "I'm glad that my ego has been converted into Buddhism and that I've been accepted and realized as a Buddhist citizen, a compassionate person." I used to feel extraordinarily good and so rewarded. Where that came from was no question: I felt so strong and strengthened by the whole thing. In fact, I began to feel that if I didn't have that kind of encouragement in myself, I would have a lot of difficulty studying the vajrayana. I felt so grateful, so good. So this slogan means to maintain a sense of satisfaction and joyfulness in spite of all the little problems and hassles in one's life.

This slogan is connected to the previous one. ["Of the two witnesses, hold the principal one."] If you have been raised in the Judeo-Christian tradition of discipline, the idea of watching yourself is based purely on guilt. But in this case, it is not that way. We do not have any logic that acknowledges, understands, or presents a concept like original sin. From our point of view, you are not basically condemned. Your naughtiness is not necessarily regarded as your problem—although it *is* witnessed, obviously. You are not fundamentally condemned; your temporary naughtinesses are regarded as coming from temporary problems only. Therefore, to follow up on that, this slogan says, "Always maintain only a joyful mind." It is a joyful mind because you do not have to be startled by any situation of wretchedness or, for that matter, sudden upliftedness. Instead, you can maintain a sense of cheerfulness all along.

To start with, you maintain a sense of cheerfulness because you are on the path; you are actually doing something about yourself. While most sentient beings have no idea what should be done with themselves, at least you have some lead on it, which is fantastic. If you step out into Brooklyn or the black hole of Calcutta, you will realize that what we are trying to do with ourselves is incredible. Generally, nobody has the first idea about anything like this at all. It is incredible, fantastic. You should be tremendously excited and feel wonderful that somebody even thought of such an idea.

There is a sense of joy from that point of view, a sense of celebration which you can refer to whenever you feel depressed, whenever you feel that you do not have enough in the environment to cheer you up, or whenever you feel that you do not have the kind of feedback you need

in order to practice. The idea is that whether it is a rainy day, a stormy day, a sunny day, a very hot day, or a very cold day, whether you are hungry, thirsty, very full, or very sick—you can maintain a sense of cheerfulness. I do not think I have to explain that too much. There is a sense of basic cheerfulness that allows you to wake yourself up.

That joy seems to be the beginning of compassion. We could say that this slogan is based on how to go about maintaining your awareness of the practice of mahayana—literally and fully. You might feel uptight about somebody's terrible job, that his or her particular shittiness has been transferred onto you and has fucked up the whole environment. But in this case, you don't blame such a person, you blame yourself. And blaming yourself is a delightful thing to do. You begin to take a very cheerful attitude toward the whole thing. So you are transcending *oy vey*—getting out of Brooklyn, metaphorically speaking. You could do that. It is possible to do that.

This kind of cheerfulness has a lot of guts. It is founded in buddha nature, tathagatagarbha. It is founded in the basic compassion of people who have already done such a thing themselves: people like Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, Jamgön Kongtrül, Milarepa, Marpa, and all the rest. So we could do it too. It is founded on a real situation.

If someone punches you in the mouth and says, "You are terrible," you should be grateful that such a person has actually acknowledged you and said so. You could, in fact, respond with tremendous dignity by saying, "Thank you, I appreciate your concern." In that way his neurosis is taken over by you, taken into you, much as is done in tonglen practice. There is an immense sacrifice taking place here. If you think this is ridiculously trippy, you are right. In some sense the whole thing *is* ridiculously trippy. But if somebody doesn't begin to provide some kind of harmony, we will not be able to develop sanity in this world at all. Somebody has to plant the seed so that sanity can happen on this earth.

22

If you can practice even when distracted, you are well trained.

We have all kinds of situations that we have to handle in ordinary life, even states that we are not aware of, but we are not particularly con-

cerned about our existence; we are more concerned with our neurosis and our games. If we are in a very high level of uptightness, as soon as that happens there is no awareness. But we can also immediately experience a sense of awareness. Traditionally, any chaos that came up was regarded as a shout for some kind of holiness or help, blessing or prayer. In our ordinary, everyday life, in theistic traditions also, each time something suddenly comes up, we say, "Goodness, look at that," or we utter sacred names. Traditionally, that was supposed to be a reminder for awareness. But we never use it that way these days; we just use swear words in the most degrading way.

The idea of this slogan is the realization that whenever situations of an ordinary nature or extraordinary nature come up—our pot boils over, or our steak is turned into charcoal, or suddenly we slip and lose our grasp—a sudden memory of awareness should take place. Jamgön Kongtrül's commentary talks about a well-trained, powerful horse who loses his balance and suddenly regains it again through losing it. And the sutras talk about the bodhisattva's actions being like those of a well-trained athlete who slips on a slippery surface and in the process of slipping regains his or her balance by using the force of the slipping process. It is similar, I suppose, to skiing, where you use the force that goes down and let yourself slide down through the snow—suddenly you gain attention and develop balance out of that.

So whenever there is the sudden glimpse or sudden surprise of losing one's grip—that seeming fear of losing grip of one's reality can be included properly. To do so there is a need for renunciation. It is not your chauvinistic trip, that you are a fantastically powerful and strong person and also have a sense of mindfulness taking place all the time. But when something hits you, which is a result of unmindfulness, then suddenly that unmindfulness creates a reminder automatically. So you actually get back on track, so to speak, able to handle your life.

We begin to realize that we can actually practice in spite of our wandering thoughts. I'm sorry to be such a chauvinist, but let me give an example of that. What used to happen was that I would be terribly hurt, psychologically depressed, and pushed into dark corners by my good tutor and by my administration in Surmang monastery. When I was more remorseful, more sad, and more helpless—but carefully helpless, deliberately helpless—I used to think of my root teacher Jamgön Kongtrül, and weep. After he departed from Surmang monastery, I kept think-

ing of him, and he actually did something to me, cheered me up. I used to try the vajrayana approach to devotion: I would say to all my attendants, "Go out! I don't need to observe teatime at this point; I'm going to read." Then I would lie back and cry for thirty minutes, or sometimes forty-five minutes. Then somebody would jump up. My attendants became very worried, thinking that I was sick or something. And I would say, "Send them back. Go away. I don't need any more tea."

But sometimes I found that was not very effective, that it was too early to introduce vajrayana devotion, because we didn't have enough basic training. So I developed a new tactic, which was purely in accordance with this slogan. Whenever there was any problem or chaos, I would tell Jamgön Kongtrül about it when I visited him, and when I came back, I began to use a new method. Whenever there was any chaos or problem, or even when there was goodness or a celebration—whenever *anything* happened—I would just come back to my existence and my memory of him, as well as my memory of the path and the practice. I began to be able to feel a sense of awareness, quick awareness, very direct awareness. This awareness was not necessarily related with the memory of Jamgön Kongtrül; it was the awareness that comes when you are just drifting off and the process of drifting off brings you back. That is what is meant here. For instance, if you are a good rider, your mind might be wandering, but you will not fall off your horse. In other words, even if you are drifting off, if that process of drifting off can bring you back, that is the mark of perfect practice.

The idea is that you have been trained already, so you will not have any problem in continuing. When pleasurable or painful circumstances hit, you do not become their slave. You have learned how to reflect suddenly on tonglen and on bodhichitta mind, so you are not subject to extreme pleasure and extreme pain or depression at all. When you meet with a situation, that situation affects your emotions and your state of mind. But whenever your state of mind and your emotions are affected, because of that jolt, suddenly the situation itself becomes your awareness and your mindfulness. It comes to you, so there is less need for you to put effort into it from your end. You do not have to try to protect, to understand, or to be watchful. That does not mean that you should just give up and things will come to you all the time. There is obviously a need for you to develop basic awareness and mindfulness and to be alert

altogether. But that alertness could be a fundamental frame of mind, which is connected with the paramita of meditation.

What we have been discussing in point five is quite straightforward. The main point is not to let yourself be wounded by the fangs of neurosis, the fangs of the kleshas. The way to do that is to realize that "all dharma agrees at one point," which is the taming of one's ego. That is the scale on which practitioners can be weighed. "Of the two witnesses, hold the principal one" means to start with your own judgment of how you are doing. "Always maintain only a joyful mind" means having a sense of cheerfulness. Because you are not trapped in heavy-handed discipline, you can experience a sense of joy, particularly when extremely evil or extremely joyful situations occur to you. And the mark of being well trained is that you can practice even when distracted.

If you practice some of this, I am sure we will not have any problem in producing thousands of buddhas and bodhisattvas in this century!

POINT SIX

Disciplines of Mind Training

Point Six and Prajnaparamita

The paramita associated with the sixth point of mind training is prajnaparamita. These slogans are all connected with sharpening your intelligence in order to work with yourself. That is the idea of the sword of prajna. Prajna is regarded as the sword that cuts the bondage of ego. The way to cut the bondage of ego in mahayana practice is basically the same as in vipashyana practice—it is awareness, relating to the rest of your world and to your life. It is connected with a larger sense of your entire life and particularly with postmeditation experience.

Whatever occurs in your life is governed by prajna, which cuts through habitual or potential neurosis. Applying that tremendous sense of mindfulness and awareness comes from the great concentration that is developed through the bodhisattva path. With the help of the shamatha and vipashyana principles, you learn how to consolidate yourself as a mahayana practitioner—being in a state of compassion, kindness, openness, and gentleness.

On the other hand, you are also in a state of egolessness. There is no clinging, no working or dwelling on anything connected with ego, atman, or soul. When you are not dwelling on anything connected with ego, the activities described in the lojong text begin to permeate your life. They begin to manifest. You realize that there is no "I" to meditate on and, for that matter, no "I am" to propagate your existence. Because of that, you are able to exchange yourself for others. By first becoming

able to sacrifice yourself, you are able to overcome obstacles. Then you can relate with the rest of the world. In that way, you learn how to deal with your journey on the path by means of the sword of prajna.

23

Always abide by the three basic principles.

This slogan is a general description as to how we can practice the buddhadharma according to the three basic principles of hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana. It is connected with a sense of keeping the discipline of all three yanas—hinayana mindfulness practice, mahayana benevolence, and vajrayana crazy wisdom—all at the same time.

We may begin to behave in a crazy style unfounded in any particular tradition and disregard the dignity of other traditions, disrupting whole social setups founded on such religious traditions. That is not supposed to happen. We can actually relieve ourselves from doing such frivolous things. Basing our spiritual practice on our own self-snugness and self-delight seems to be one of the most dangerous things of all. We have our trip together: our philosophy is worked out, our quotations are on time; we have our grammar and language already set up—but after all that, we don't want to give up our ego. We have some kind of ground to walk on, and we do not want to give up our most sacred and secret property. That becomes problematic; we are not actually following the journey properly. The text says that dharma should not be perverted on the basis of happiness, which in this case is any kind of confirmation existing within the dharmic realm.

The three basic principles are also described as [1] keeping the two vows, [2] refraining from outrageous action, and [3] developing patience.

The first is keeping the promises you made when you took the refuge and bodhisattva vows, keeping them completely. This one is quite straightforward.

Number two is refraining from outrageous action. When you begin to practice lojong, you realize that you shouldn't have any consideration for yourself; therefore, you try to act in a self-sacrificing manner. But often your attempt to manifest selflessness becomes exhibitionism. You

let yourself be thrown in jail or crucified on a cross. You manifest unselfish actions because of your convictions—your so-called convictions in this case—but your actions are still based on your *idea* of being a decent person. You might act on a whim or become very crazy, involving yourself in unselfish exhibitionism of all kinds, such as going on long fasts or lying down in the street in the name of bodhisattva practice. Many of our American friends have done just those things. However, that approach should be regarded as pure exhibitionism rather than as the accomplishment of bodhisattva action.

Number three is developing patience. Usually, there is extreme confusion about patience. That is to say, you can be patient with your friends, but you cannot be patient with your enemies; you can be patient with people whom you are trying to cultivate or your particular protégés, but you cannot be patient with those who are outside of your protégé-ism. That kind of extreme is actually a form of personality cult, the cult of yourself, which is not such a good idea. In fact, it has been said that it is absolutely *not* a good idea.

Through prajna, you realize how much you are trying to become something. Having become somewhat accomplished in lojong practice and in tonglen training, you may begin to feel that it is time for you to branch out and become a leader or a hero. But you should watch out for that. This is one of the basic points of conduct or discipline. It is connected with the paramita of prajna: because you begin to discriminate who you are, what you are, and what you are doing, you are constantly watchful of all of that.

24

Change your attitude, but remain natural.

Generally, our attitude is that we always want to protect our own territory first. We want to preserve our own ground—others come afterward. The point of this slogan is to change that attitude around, so that we actually reflect on others first and on ourselves later. It is very simple and direct. You usually practice gentleness and tenderness toward yourself and the opposite of that toward others. If you want something from

outside, you will send someone else to get it for you instead of going out and getting it yourself. So this slogan applies to the attempt to impose your power and your authority on others. You also try to get away with things. For instance, you don't wash the dishes, hoping that somebody else will do it. Changing your attitude means reversing your attitude altogether—instead of making someone else do something, you do it yourself.

Then the slogan says "remain natural," which has a sense of relaxation. It means taming your basic being, taming your mind altogether so that you are not constantly pushing other people around. Instead you take the opportunity to blame yourself.

We are talking about changing your attitude of cherishing yourself. Instead of cherishing yourself, you cherish others—and then you just relax. That's it. It's very simple-minded.

25

Don't talk about injured limbs.

Because of your arrogance and your aggression, you prefer to talk about other people's defects as a way of building yourself up. The point of this slogan is *not* taking delight in somebody else's defects or injured limbs. "Injured limbs" refers very literally to people's psychological or physical state: being blind or dumb or slow. It refers to all kinds of physical defects that a person might possess. This seems to be the general ethic already set up by Christianity, that nobody should be condemned on account of his or her physical defects, but everybody is regarded as a person. We generally don't do that anyway, in any case.

This is not a puritanical approach to reality, but simply realizing that if a person has problems in dealing with his or her life, we do not have to exaggerate that by making remarks about it. We could simply go along with that person's problems. If somebody is completely freaked out and exaggerating his or her particular realm of phenomena, or freaked out about having an encounter with somebody, that is not regarded as an ugly manifestation of that person. It is just a general sense of his or her response to reality, which takes place all the time.

26

Don't ponder others.

In this slogan, "pondering others" means picking on other people's little misgivings and problems. One of the problems we have generally is that when somebody does something to us or violates our principles, we keep picking on that particular thing. We would like to get at him and make sure that person's problems are subject to attack, subject to unhealthiness. For instance, because you have labored through your tonglen practice and worked so hard, you develop tremendous arrogance. You feel as though you have gone through so much and that your effort makes you a worthy person. So when you meet somebody who has not accomplished what you have, you would like to put them down. This slogan is very simple: Don't do that.

I do not think there is very much difference between this slogan and the preceding one; they are basically saying the same thing. Both slogans are very simple and direct. All the slogans are points that come to you—not particularly traffic signs but reminders. And each time a particular point occurs to you, the slogans as a whole become more meaningful.

27

Work with the greatest defilements first.

You should work with whatever is your greatest obstacle first—whether it is aggression, passion, pride, arrogance, jealousy, or what have you. You should not just say, "I will sit more first, and I will deal with that later." Working with the greatest defilements means working with the highlights of your experience or your problems. You do not just want to work with chicken shit, you want to work with the chicken itself.

If we have philosophical, metaphysical, poetic, artistic, or technological hang-ups related with our particular neurosis, we should bring them out first rather than last. When we have a hang-up, we should work with that hang-up. It has been said that all dharmas should be applied in trying to tame it, but at the same time we should not try to arrive at certain

results. So the idea is to purify and to work on the highlights that come up rather than regarding them as junk. We simply work on any highlight or problem that comes up in our state of mind directly and straightforwardly.

28

Abandon any hope of fruition.

This slogan means that you should give up any possibilities of becoming the greatest person in the world by means of your training. In particular, you may quite impatiently expect that because of lojong practice you will become a better person. You may be hoping that you will be invited to more little clubs and gatherings by your protégés or friends, who are impressed with you. The point is that you have to give up any such possibility; otherwise, you could become an egomaniac. In other words, it is too early for you to collect disciples.

Working with the slogans does not mean looking for temporary revelation or trying to achieve something by doing little smart things that have managed to quell people's problems in the past. You may have become a great speaker by giving one talk, or a great psychologist who has managed to conquer other people's neuroses, or a great literary figure who has written several books or a famous musician who has produced several albums. Such things are somewhat based on relating with reality properly, being connected with reality. But you want to subjugate the world in your own particular style, however subtle and sneaky that may be.

By doing the same kind of trick, you hope to attain enlightenment. You have tuned in to a professional approach and become a professional achiever. So there is the possibility that you might approach practice in the same way, thinking that you can actually con the buddha mind within yourself and sneakily attain enlightenment. That seems to be the problem referred to in this particular slogan. It says in the commentary that any pursuit of this life's happiness, joy, fame, or wisdom, or the hope of attaining some state of glorious liberation in the life hereafter, could be regarded as a problem.

29

Abandon poisonous food.

If the practice of egolessness begins to become just another way of building up your ego—building your ego by giving up your ego—it is like eating poisonous food; it will not take effect. In fact, rather than providing an eternally awakened state of mind, it will provide you with death, because you are holding on to your ego. So if your reason for sitting or doing postmeditation practice or any other kind of practice is self-improvement, it is like eating poisonous food. "If I sit properly, with the greatest discipline and exertion, then I will become the best meditator of all"—that is a poisonous attitude.

This is a very powerful slogan for us. It means that whatever we do with our practice, if that practice is connected with our personal achievement, which is called "spiritual materialism," or the individual glory that we are in the right and others are wrong, and we would like to conquer their wrongness or evil because we are on the side of God and so forth—that kind of bullshit or cow dung is regarded as eating poisonous food. Such food may be presented to us beautifully and nicely, but when we begin to eat it, it stinks.

30

Don't be so predictable.

The literal translation of this slogan is "Don't be consistent," but it is more like "Don't be so kind and faithful, so guileless." That is to say, an ordinary person or man of the world would have some understanding about his relationship with his enemies and his friends and how much debt he owes people. It is all very predictable. Similarly, when somebody inflicts pain on you, you keep that for long-term storage, long-term discussion, long-term resentment. You would eventually like to strike back at him, not forgetting his insult in ten or even twenty years.

This slogan has an interesting twist. To begin with, we could use the analogy of the trustworthy friend. Some people are trustworthy people, traditional people, maybe you could say old-fashioned people. When

you become friends with people like that, they always remember your friendship, and the trust between you lasts for a very long time. In the example of the trustworthy person, you *should* always remember your connection with him or her and his or her connection with you. But if somebody gives you a bad deal, or if you have a lot of conflict with somebody, you should not constantly hold a grudge against him. In this case, the point is that you should *not* always remember someone's bad dealings with you. This slogan is somewhat confusing, but the point is to give up altogether your long memory of antagonism.

Usually everything we do is predictable. When we have something good happen—for instance, when someone brings us a bottle of champagne—we are always trying to repay that kindness with something else, like inviting them for dinner or saying nice things. And how we relate when something bad happens is the same. We are usually predictable in how we do that as well. Slowly we built up society out of that.

When somebody is about to inflict pain on us, we usually wait until they actually strike us and are unkind to us. We wait for that person to begin to write bad articles about us. Then we have made an enemy out of somebody. That is not the proper approach. The proper approach is to make friends immediately rather than waiting for something to strike. Instead of waiting until a person commits a sin or acknowledges his aggression toward you, you communicate immediately and directly. So you are communicating directly rather than waiting for strategy. That is precisely what the commentary says, and that is what we are trying to practice at this point.

31

Don't malign others.

You would like to put people in the wrong by saying disparaging things. However pleasantly coated with sugar and ice cream, underneath you are trying to put people down, trying to get revenge. Disparaging people is based on showing off your own virtue. You think that your virtues can only show because other people's are lessened, because they are less virtuous than you are. This applies to both education and practice. You might have better training in the dharma and say, "Somebody's atten-

tion span in his shamatha practice is shorter than mine; therefore I am better," or "Somebody knows fewer terms than I do." Fundamentally, these are all ways of saying, "That other person is stupid, and I am better than he is." I think this slogan is very straightforward.

32

Don't wait in ambush.

The Tibetan version of this slogan literally says, "Don't ambush," that is, wait for somebody to fall down so that you can attack. You are waiting for that person to fall into the trap or problem you want or expect. You want them to have that misfortune, and you hope that misfortune will take place in a way which will allow you to attack.

If you are having a disagreement with somebody, you don't usually attack him or her right away because you don't want to be in a powerless position. Instead, you wait for him to fall apart, and then you attack him. Sometimes you pretend to be his adviser, and you attack him in that disguise, pointing out to him how wretched he is. You say, "I have been waiting to tell you this. Now that you are falling apart completely, I am going to take the opportunity to tell you that you are not so good. I am in much better shape than you are." That is a sort of opportunism, a bandit's approach. That bandit's approach is the meaning of waiting in ambush, which happens quite frequently.

33

Don't bring things to a painful point.

Don't blame your sense of dissatisfaction, pain, and misery on somebody else, and do not try to lay your power trips on others. Whatever power you have—domestic power, literary power, or political power—don't impose it on somebody else.

This slogan also means not to humiliate people. An important point of the bodhisattva idea altogether is to encourage people on their path. However, you could relate with people in such a way that you progress

much faster on the path than they do. There are ways of slowing down other people's journeys so that you can stay ahead of them. But in this slogan, instead of doing that, you develop the other way around—you come along behind the others.

34

Don't transfer the ox's load to the cow.

It is very easy to say, "It's not my fault, it's all your fault; it's always your fault." It is very easy to say that, but it is questionable. One has to think about one's problems personally, honestly, and genuinely. If there were no *you* to initiate situations, there would not be any problems at all. But since you exist, therefore there are also problems. We do not want to transfer that load.

The ox is capable of carrying burdens; the cow is less capable of carrying burdens. So the point of this slogan is that you do not transfer your heavy load to someone who is weaker than you. Transferring the ox's load to the cow means not wanting to deal with anything on your own. You don't want to take on any responsibilities; you just pass them on to your secretary or your friends or anybody you can order about. In English we call this "passing the buck." Doing that is a bad idea, since we are supposed to be cutting down chaos and creating less traffic in the samsaric world altogether. We are supposed to be cutting down on administrative problems and trying to sort things out. We could invite other people to be our helpers, but we cannot pass the buck to them. So don't transfer the ox's load to the cow.

35

Don't try to be the fastest.

When practitioners begin to develop their understanding of the dharma and their appreciation of the dharma, they sometimes fall into a sort of racehorse approach. They become involved with who is the fastest: who can understand the highest meaning of mahamudra or the greatest

meaning of tantra or the highest idea of ultimate bodhichitta, or who has understood any of the hidden teachings. Such practitioners are concerned with who can do their prostrations faster, who can sit better, who can eat better, who can do this and that better. They are always trying to race with other people. But if our practice is regarded purely as a race, we have a problem. The whole thing has become a game rather than actual practice, and there is no seed of benevolence and gentleness in the practitioner. So you should not use your practice as a way to get ahead of your fellow students. The point of this slogan is to not try to achieve fame, honor, or distinction through one's practice.

36

Don't act with a twist.

Acting with a twist means that since you think you are going to get the best in any case, you might as well volunteer for the worst. That is very sneaky. You could act with a twist in dealing with your teacher, your students, your life situation—everything. You could pretend to be a completely benevolent person who always takes the blame, realizing all along that you are going to get the best. It is quite straightforward, I think.

Acting with a twist is a form of spiritual materialism. It is always having the ulterior motive of working for your own benefit. For instance, in order to gain good results for yourself, you may temporarily take the blame for something. Or you may practice lojong very hard in order to get something out of it or with the idea of protecting yourself from sickness. The practice of this slogan is to drop that attitude of looking for personal benefits from practice—either as an immediate or a long-term result.

37

Don't make gods into demons.

This slogan refers to our general tendency to dwell on pain and go through life with constant complaints. We should not make painful that which is inherently joyful.

At this point, you may have achieved a certain level of taming yourself. You may have developed the tonglen practice of exchanging yourself for others and feel that your achievement is real. But at the same time, you are so arrogant about the whole thing that your achievement begins to become an evil intention, because you think you can show off. In that way, dharma becomes adharma, or nondharma.

Although your achievement may be the right kind of achievement and you may actually have a very good experience—if you regard that as a way of proving yourself and building up your ego, it is not so good.

38

Don't seek others' pain as the limbs of your own happiness.

This slogan is quite straightforward: you hope that somebody else will suffer so that you can benefit from it. Here is a very simple analogy: if a member of the sangha dies, you might inherit his or her meditation cushion, or if you are a vajrayana practitioner, you might inherit his bell and dorje. We could expand on that logic in any number of situations, but I don't think it is necessary for us to do so.

We should not build our own happiness on the suffering of others. Although it may benefit us if someone experiences misfortune, we should not wish for that and dream about what we could get out of such a situation. Happiness that is built on pain is spurious and only leads to depression in the long run.

POINT SEVEN

Guidelines of Mind Training

Point Seven and Postmeditation

The guidelines of mind training have to do with how to proceed further in our everyday life. This topic seems to be connected with a general realization of how we can conduct ourselves properly in our relationships and in the general postmeditation experience.

39

All activities should be done with one intention.

The one intention is to have a sense of gentleness toward others and a willingness to be helpful to others—always. That seems to be the essence of the bodhisattva vow. In whatever you do—sitting, walking, eating, drinking, even sleeping—you should always take the attitude of being of benefit to all sentient beings.

40

Correct all wrongs with one intention.

When you are in the midst of perverse circumstances such as intense sickness, a bad reputation, court cases, economic or domestic crises, an

increase of kleshas, or resistance to practice, you should develop compassion for all sentient beings who also suffer like this, and you should aspire to take on their suffering yourself through the practice of lojong.

We need to correct, or to overcome, all the wrongs or bad circumstances that we experience. Instead of having a negative attitude toward practice and not wanting to practice any longer—whenever such perversions and problems occur, they should be overcome. In other words, if your practice becomes good when things are good for you but becomes nonexistent when the situation is bad, that is not the way. Instead, whether situations are good or bad, you continue your practice.

To correct all wrongs means to stamp on the kleshas. Whenever you don't want to practice—stamp on that, and then practice. Whenever any bad circumstance comes up that might put you off—stamp on it. In this slogan you are deliberately, immediately, and very abruptly suppressing the kleshas.

41

Two activities: one at the beginning, one at the end.

The point of this slogan is to begin and end each day with twofold bodhichitta. In the morning you should remember bodhichitta and take the attitude of not separating yourself from it, and at the end of the day, you should examine what you have done. If you have not separated yourself from twofold bodhichitta, you should be delighted and vow to take the same attitude again the next day. And if you were separated from bodhichitta, you should vow to reconnect with it the next day.

This slogan is a very simple one. It means that your life is sandwiched by your vow to put others before yourself and by your sense of commitment to twofold bodhichitta. When you get up in the morning, as soon as you wake up, to start off your day you promise yourself that you will work on twofold bodhichitta and develop a sense of gentleness toward yourself and others. You promise not to blame the world and other sentient beings and to take their pain on yourself. When you go to bed, you do the same thing. In that way both your sleep and the day that follows are influenced by that commitment. It is quite straightforward.

42

Whichever of the two occurs, be patient.

Whether a joyful or a painful situation occurs, whatever happens to you, your practice is not swayed by it, but you maintain continual patience and continual practice. Whether you are in the midst of extreme happiness or extreme suffering, you should be patient. You should regard extreme suffering as the result of previous karma. Therefore, there is no need to feel remorseful. Instead you should simply try to purify any evil deeds and obscurations. Extreme happiness is also the result of previous karma, so there is no reason to indulge in it. You should donate any riches to virtuous causes, and your sense of personal authenticity and power should be resolved into virtue.

Quite often, when things are disturbing or problematic for students, they lose their sense of perspective and try to find some kind of scapegoat within the dharma. For instance, in order to justify their own inability to practice, they come up with all sorts of ideas: the environment is not right, their brothers and sisters in the practice situation are not right, the organization of the dharmic environment is not right. All sorts of complaints begin to come up. In extreme cases, people begin to take refuge in nondharmic people again and go back to situations in which their existence might be acknowledged. The idea in this slogan is to develop and maintain discipline so that whether situations are good or bad, you still maintain patience in your practice. The point is to be patient, which means taking more time and being forbearing.

43

Observe these two, even at the risk of your life.

You should maintain the disciplines you have committed yourself to: in particular, [1] the refuge vow and [2] the bodhisattva vow. You should maintain the general livelihood of being a decent Buddhist and, beyond that, the special discipline of the practice of lojong, or mind training. This practice should become a very important part of your life.

For tantric practitioners, this slogan means that in this life and in any future lives, you should keep the three-yana discipline. This applies to dharmic principles in general and to the practice of lojong in particular. You should always keep that bond, or samaya, even at the risk of your life.

44

Train in the three difficulties.

The three difficulties have to do with how we relate to our own kleshas, or neuroses. The first difficulty is to realize the point at which you are tricked by your own emotions, or kleshas. You must look and understand that trick, which is very difficult. The second difficulty is to dispel or to exorcise our emotionalism. And the third difficulty is to cut the continuity of that emotionalism. In other words, in the beginning it is very hard to recognize your neuroses; then it is very difficult to overcome them; and thirdly, it is very difficult to cut through them. Those are the three difficulties.

When neurosis arises, you first have to recognize it as neurosis. Then you have to apply a technique or antidote to overcome it. Since neurosis basically comes from selfishness, from placing too much importance on yourself, the antidote is that you have to cut through your ego. Finally, you have to have the determination not to follow the neurosis or continue to be attracted to it. There is a sense of abruptly overcoming neurosis.

All together we have six categories. The difficulties are: first, it is difficult to recognize our kleshas; second, it is difficult to overcome them; third, it is difficult to cut through them. What you should do is: first, recognize them; second, try to overcome them; third, take a vow never to re-create such things again.

It is very difficult to relate with the bodhisattva principle, or for that matter, any monumental concept. Therefore, the slogan says, "Train in the three difficulties." But if you are willing to practice lojong, your mind will be completely trained and indoctrinated into the bodhisattva's way of thinking. In fact, *lojong* literally means "indoctrination": *lo* means

"intelligence," and *jong* means "cleaning up" or "training." The idea is to indoctrinate yourself so that you cannot get away from that monolithic principle called buddha nature, bodhichitta, tathagatagarbha.

45

Take on the three principal causes.

"Cause" refers to that which causes you to be a good dharmic person or bodhisattva. The first cause is having a good teacher. The second cause is applying your mind and basic demeanor to the dharma. The third cause is having food and housing so that it is possible for you to practice the dharma. You should try to maintain those three situations and take delight that you have such opportunities.

To take on the first principal cause is to realize the necessity of the teacher, who actually allows you to get into situations.

To take on the second principal cause is to realize that one's mind should be tamed. For instance, your mind might be into a business deal, or a teaching deal, or a book-writing deal, or into making a funny kind of monumental experience for yourself. You might have all kinds of ambitions about your life. This attitude was not all that prominent in the days when Jamgön Kongtrül wrote his commentary on the slogans, but today we have a lot more choices. You might think you can hunt animals by becoming a great Buddhist or a great bodhisattva, or be a great author, a great prostitute, or a great salesman. But that state of mind, that type of ambition, is not all that good. Instead, you have to come to the point at which your state of mind would say, "I would like to devote myself to the dharma completely and fully."

To take on the third principal cause is to realize that it is possible for you to practice the dharma because of having the right circumstances, because you have been taking an open attitude toward your life and have already worked out some kind of livelihood. Your food and clothes and shelter are taken care of, and economically you can afford to practice.

So you should take on and practice these three causes: [1] working with a teacher, [2] training your mind, and [3] establishing an economic base for practice.

46

Pay heed that the three never wane.

The first thing you should not let wane is devotion to your spiritual friend [kalyanamitra]. Your mental attitude of admiration, dedication, and gratefulness toward the spiritual friend should not diminish. The second thing you should not let wane is a delightful attitude toward lojong, or the taming of your mind. Your appreciation for receiving such teachings as lojong or mind training should not diminish. And the third thing you should not let wane is your conduct—the hinayana and mahayana vows that you have taken. Your practice of the hinayana and mahayana disciplines should not diminish.

This slogan is straight and low-key. At this point, in practicing mahayana, it is very necessary for us to pick up some basic strength. We are not just careless, carefree people, but our attitude is one of having basic strength, basic energy.

47

Keep the three inseparable.

Your practice of lojong should be wholehearted and complete. In body, speech, and mind, you should be inseparable from lojong.

48

Train without bias in all areas.
It is crucial always to do this pervasively and wholeheartedly.

The practice of lojong includes everyone and everything. It is important to be thorough and impartial in your practice, excluding nothing at all that comes up in your experience.

49

Always meditate on whatever provokes resentment.

Always meditate on that which is most difficult. If you do not start right away, the moment a difficulty arises, it is very hard to overcome it.

50

Don't be swayed by external circumstances.

Although your external circumstances may vary, your practice should not be dependent on that. Whether you are sick or well, rich or poor, have a good reputation or bad reputation, you should practice lojong. It is very simple: if your situation is right, breathe that out; if your situation is wrong, breathe that in.

51

This time, practice the main points.

"This time" refers to this lifetime. You have wasted many lives in the past, and in the future you may not have the opportunity to practice. But now, as a human being who has heard the dharma, you do. So without wasting any more time, you should practice the main points.

This teaching is threefold: [1] the benefit of others is more important than yourself; [2] practicing the teachings of the guru is more important than analytical study; and [3] practicing bodhichitta is more important than any other practice.

52

Don't misinterpret.

There are six things that you may twist or misinterpret in your practice: patience, yearning, excitement, compassion, priorities, and joy. It is a

misinterpretation of patience to be patient about everything in your life but the practice of dharma. Misinterpreted yearning is to foster yearning for pleasure and wealth but not to encourage the yearning to practice dharma thoroughly and properly. Misinterpreted excitement is to get excited by wealth and entertainment, but not to be excited by the study of dharma. It is twisted compassion to be compassionate to those who endure hardships in order to practice dharma, but to be unconcerned and uncompassionate to those who do evil. Twisted priorities means to work diligently out of self-interest at that which benefits you in the world, but not to practice dharma. Twisted joy is to be happy when sorrow afflicts your enemies, but not to rejoice in virtue and in the joy of transcending samsara. You should absolutely and completely stop all six of those misinterpretations.

53

Don't vacillate.

You should not vacillate in your enthusiasm for practice. If you sometimes practice and other times do not, that will not give birth to certainty in the dharma. Therefore, don't think too much. Just concentrate one-pointedly on mind training.

54

Train wholeheartedly.

Trust yourself and your practice wholeheartedly. Train purely in lojong—single-mindedly, with no distractions.

55

Liberate yourself by examining and analyzing.

Simply look at your mind and analyze it. By doing those two things, you should be liberated from kleshas and ego-clinging. Then you can practice lojong.

56

Don't wallow in self-pity.

Don't feel sorry for yourself. If somebody else achieves success or inherits a million dollars, don't waste time feeling bad because it wasn't you.

57

Don't be jealous.

If somebody else receives praise and you don't, don't be envious.

58

Don't be frivolous.

Don't demonstrate frivolous jealousy at your friends' success. If an acquaintance is wearing a new tie or a new blouse that you yourself would like, don't capriciously point out its shortcomings to him or her. "Yes, it's nice, but it has a stain on it." That will only serve to irritate him and won't help either his or your practice.

59

Don't expect applause.

Don't expect others to praise you or raise toasts to you. Don't count on receiving credit for your good deeds or good practice.

Concluding Verses

When the five dark ages occur,
This is the way to transform them into the path of bodhi.
This is the essence of the amrita of the oral instructions,
Which were handed down from the tradition of the sage of
Suvarnadvipa.

Having awakened the karma of previous training
And being urged on by intense dedication,
I disregarded misfortune and slander
And received oral instruction on taming ego-fixation.
Now, even at death, I will have no regrets.

[These two verses are the concluding comments of Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje, the author of *The Root Text of the Seven Points of Training the Mind.*]

Appendix

Forty-six Ways in Which a Bodhisattva Fails

Thirty-four Contradictions to Embodying Virtue

Contradictions to the Paramita of Generosity

Contradictions to Generosity with Regard to Material Things

1. Not offering to the three jewels
2. Giving in to possessiveness

Contradictions to the Generosity of Protection from Fear

3. Not respecting more experienced people
4. Not answering questions

Those That Prevent the Generosity of Others

5. Not accepting invitations as a guest
6. Angrily refusing gifts

Contradiction to Generosity with Regard to Dharma

7. Not teaching the dharma to those who want it

Contradictions to the Paramita of Discipline

Contradictions Mainly to Benefiting Others

1. Rejecting those who do not keep their discipline
2. Not developing learning, which inspires others' faith
3. Making little effort for the benefit of sentient beings
4. Not performing evil actions even though it is permitted when one has compassion and there is a need

Contradictions Mainly to Benefiting Oneself

5. Willingly taking up any of the five kinds of wrong livelihood
6. Mindlessly indulging
7. Due to desire and attachment, remaining in samsara

Contradictions to Benefiting Both Oneself and Others

8. Not preventing getting a bad reputation
9. Not controlling the kleshas

Contradictions to the Paramita of Patience

1. Not practicing the four dharmas of a practitioner (not returning curses for curses, anger for anger, blow for blow, or insult for insult)
2. Not working peacefully with, but rejecting, people who are angry at you
3. Refusing to accept another's apology
4. Giving in to anger

Contradictions to the Paramita of Exertion

1. Collecting followers for fame and fortune
2. Not overcoming laziness and so forth
3. Indulging in busyness and chatter

Contradictions to the Paramita of Meditation

1. Not seeking instruction in samadhi
2. Not abandoning obscurations to meditation
3. Viewing the experience of meditation as good and being attached to it

Contradictions to the Paramita of Prajna

Faults Related to Lesser Things

1. Not respecting the shravakayana, and therefore rejecting it
2. Having abandoned one's own tradition, the mahayana, exerting oneself in the shravakayana
3. In the same way, studying non-Buddhist literature
4. Although exerting oneself in the mahayana, preferring shravaka and non-Buddhist literature

Faults Related to Excellent Things

5. Not taking interest in the distinctive features of mahayana
6. Not seeking the holy dharma due to pride, laziness, and so forth
7. Praising oneself and disparaging others
8. Relying on the words rather than the meaning

Twelve Contradictions to Benefiting Sentient Beings

General Application

1. Not helping those in need
2. Not caring for the sick
3. Not removing the suffering of others
4. Not correcting those who are heedless

Specific application

Faults of Not Being Helpful

1. Not repaying kindness
2. Not removing the pain of others
3. Not giving to those in need even though you can
4. Not benefiting those around you
5. Not acting in accord with the customs of others
6. Not praising those who have good qualities

Faults of Not Overpowering

1. Not overpowering those on a perverted path
2. Not taming with miracles and higher perceptions those who must be tamed in that way

Translated by the Nālandā Translation Committee from the compilation of Jamgön Kongtrül the Great in his *Treasury of Knowledge.*

Notes

Editor's Foreword

1. The Kadam lineage, founded by Dromtönpa, the main disciple of Atisha, places great emphasis on monastic discipline, the cultivation of bodhichitta and compassion, and mind training. This emphasis was carried into the Kagyü lineage by Gampopa, who studied with Kadampa teachers prior to studying with Milarepa.

2. For further discussion of the origin and history of these teachings, see Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Universal Compassion*; Jamgön Kongtrül, *The Great Path of Awakening*; Geshe Rapten and Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, *Advice from a Spiritual Friend*.

3. Vidyadhara: "insight or awareness holder" or "crazy-wisdom holder," an honorific title given to the author of this book, Chögyam Trungpa.

4. Vajradhatu is an association of Buddhist meditation centers founded by Chögyam Trungpa. Following Trungpa Rinpoche's death, Vajradhatu was incorporated into the larger umbrella organization Shambhala International.

Introduction

1. *Hinayana, mahayana,* and *vajrayana* refer to the three stages of an individual's practice according to Tibetan Buddhism, not to the different schools of Buddhist practice.

Point Two

1. The word *not* is a conditional one, as it is usually linked with an object—not this or not that. The word *no* is unconditional: simply, No!

2. In vajrayana practice, students identify with the different styles of

awakened energy by visualizing themselves as deities. These visualizations arise out of and dissolve back into emptiness.

3. The complete translation of these sayings reads:

[1] May their evil deeds ripen in me. May all my virtue without exception ripen in them.

[2] I offer all my profit and gain to sentient beings, those honorable ones; I will take on all loss and defeat.

[3] May all the evil deeds and suffering of sentient beings ripen in me, and all my virtue and happiness ripen in sentient beings.

Point Three

1. "According to the traditional pattern of categorizing the three kayas, it is usually the other way around, that is, dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya."—Chögyam Trungpa.

2. The *Uttaratantra* is an important mahayana text on buddha nature transmitted by the bodhisattva Maitreya through the great teacher Asanga and is one of his five treasuries.

3. The *Diamond Sutra* is a 300-line text, known in Sanskrit as the *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra*, or the "perfection of wisdom that cuts like a diamond." It is one of the shorter and most well-known pieces of the perfection of wisdom literature, the mahayana teachings on emptiness.

4. *Dikpa* means "evil deeds" or actions that lead one away from enlightenment. It often acts in partnership with *dripa*, or "obscurations." Dripa is divided into two classes, or veils: conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality.

5. The Bön tradition is the native, pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet.

Point Four

1. A traditional phrase expressive of the mahayana view that all sentient beings at one time or another have been our mothers and thus should be treated with the utmost love and respect.

2. The sevenfold service is a traditional mahayana liturgy consisting of seven steps: prostration, offering, confession, rejoicing in the virtue of others, requesting the teachers to teach, asking the teacher to remain and not pass into nirvana, and dedicating the merit of one's practice for the benefit of all sentient beings.

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Glimpses of Abhidharma

From a Seminar on Buddhist Psychology

Introduction

THE ABHIDHARMA is perhaps regarded as dry and scholarly, theoretical. We will see. In any case I would like to welcome those of you who are brave and willing to go into it. To a certain extent you are warriors.

I have decided to present the abhidharma because I feel it is necessary in studying the Buddhist tradition to start from scratch, to begin at the beginning and present the pure, immaculate, genuine teaching. We have been doing that so far in terms of the practice of meditation and in terms of the theoretical understanding of the teaching as well. I feel it is important that the teachings be presented that way. The presentation of Eastern teachings in the West has been particularly haphazard. The teachers have something to say and they say it, but perhaps it does not reach the audience effectively, in such a way as to create the right situation for practice. These teachers have been trained and have practiced and received transmission in their own countries, but that was a different cultural situation in which a certain environment of discipline was taken for granted. They seem to presume that the same cultural background also exists in the West. But perhaps that is not the case. So for us in the West to get into a spiritual teaching, we have to get into the basic core of it. We have to build a really good foundation before we get into practices such as the yoga of inner heat or start levitating or whatever.

In getting back to the basic principles, there could be two approaches. Some people feel inclined to work purely on the intuitive or emotional level; others feel that approach is not fundamental enough and want to work on the scholarly or theoretical aspect. I would not say that these two ways conflict, but rather that they are two channels through which

to approach the subject. What we are trying to do here is to neglect neither the intellect nor the intuition, but to combine the two together. A real understanding of the teachings must be an intelligent one and a human one at the same time. The intelligent aspect is the theory; the human side is the intuitive, personal feeling of the teaching and the learning process involved in it. One might say that the study of the abhidharma is a theoretical one in some sense; but it also has the quality of personality, individuality, because the abhidharma is a survey of the psychology of the human mind. It is part of the basic philosophy of Buddhism, common to all schools—the Theravadins, the Tibetans, and so on.

The abhidharma is part of what is called the Tripitaka, the "three baskets" or "three heaps." These are the three bodies of teaching that constitute the Buddhist scriptures. The first is called the Vinayapitaka, which is concerned with discipline, the practicalities of how to live one's life in the world and understand it at the same time. The Vinaya is presented in such a way that there is no conflict between understanding and practical discipline. The second "basket" is the Sutrapitaka, which deals with certain meditative practices and various ways of training the mind, ways of accepting and using both intellect and intuition as supports of meditation. The third is the Abhidharmapitaka. Having seen the practical aspect of how you relate to the world and also the meditative, psychological aspect, we now begin to work on the background of the whole thing. This is almost, one might say, preparation to teach. The abhidharma in a sense tells us how, having understood everything, to communicate with others.

Many modern psychologists have found that the discoveries and explanations of the abhidharma coincide with their own recent discoveries and new ideas; as though the abhidharma, which was taught twenty-five hundred years ago, had been redeveloped in the modern idiom.

The abhidharma deals with the five skandhas. The skandhas represent the constant structure of human psychology as well as its pattern of evolution and the pattern of evolution of the world. The skandhas are also related to blockages of different types—spiritual ones, material ones, emotional ones. An understanding of the five skandhas shows that once we are tuned into the basic core of egohood, then anything—any experience, any inspiration—can be made into a further blockage or can become a way of freeing ourselves. Abhidharma is a very precise way of

looking at mind. Any tendency of mind, even the subtlest suggestion of a tendency, can be viewed with great precision—even something as slight as the irritation from having a fly perched on one's leg. That irritation, for example, might be classified as a friendly one which merely tends to frighten the fly away or an aggressive one which moves to kill it.

The abhidharma deals very precisely and impartially with our particular type of mind, and it is tremendously helpful for us to see our mind that way. This does not mean being purely scholarly and intellectual. We can relate to little irritations like the one of the fly as just the sort of happening that makes up the human situation. We do not particularly make a big deal about it, but we see it precisely. This eventually becomes very helpful. It is helpful not only for pure meditation but also meditation in action. The whole approach of Buddhism is oriented toward dealing with everyday life situations rather than just meditating in order to attain enlightenment. Throughout the three pitakas there is very little emphasis on enlightenment. The pitakas are handbooks of how to live in terms of the awakened state of mind, but very much on the kitchen-sink level. They are concerned with how to step out of our usual sleepwalking and deal really with actual situations. The abhidharma is a very important part of that general instruction.

Our particular study here of the abhidharma, because of limitations of time and space and the patience of the audience, has to be something of a rough survey. Nevertheless as a basic introduction, I think it will be extremely useful.

Question: I didn't really understand the difference between the Sutrapitaka and the Abhidharmapitaka.

Rinpoche: The Sutrapitaka gives the techniques of meditation, while the abhidharma describes the accomplished experience of meditation so that you can relate with other people about it, as well as yourself. Rather than being a cookbook, it presumes that you are familiar with certain ideas and experiences and proceeds to formulate them with great precision. That is why recent translators have run into difficulty with Buddhist texts—they have not had experience of what is being talked about. That is what is lacking in a lot of the translations.

Question: What does *abhidharma* mean?

Rinpoche: The Tibetan for *abhidharma* is *chö ngönpa* [chos mngon pa].

Chö means "dharma" in Sanskrit, the law or "isness" of things. *Ngönpa* refers to something visible or apparent, something available visually. It means, almost, something which is predictable, something you can interpret or see the pattern of. So you could say *abhidharma* means the "pattern of the dharma." Here "dharma" could be the dharma of cooking, the dharma of driving a motorcar, any kind of dharma—not dharma with a capital *D* particularly. It is the intimate, homey quality of the dharma which is very vividly presented in the abhidharma.

Question: I heard that in certain Buddhist countries that stress the study of the abhidharma the practice of meditation fell away. Is there a kind of danger in the abhidharmapitaka teachings, that if one uses them in the wrong way to relate to kitchen-sink problems, it might lead one to think one could to without meditation?

Rinpoche: I think that is highly possible, definitely. That is a problem that has come up; and in fact it is a main cause of the degeneration of the buddhadharma in the whole Buddhist world. I have heard that an outstanding scholar from Ceylon has said that no one has attained enlightenment in the last five hundred years, but that nevertheless it is our duty to keep all the theories alive so that maybe one day somebody will click. Actually, it is a basic idea among Buddhist scholars who emphasize mainly the scholarly side of the teaching that it is dangerous to begin meditating before you have mastered the theory. Then, once you have discovered everything intellectually—how to do it, what the idea is behind it—once you have gone through all the psychological images intellectually, then you do not really have to meditate because you know it all already. That approach goes along with the idea of Buddha as superscholar. Since the idea of awakened mind or enlightenment exists in the tradition, these scholars must have some view of it. They have no way of interpreting it other than as knowing everything. They think that if someone has ten or twelve Ph.D.s, he will probably attain enlightenment because he has all the answers. Then someone with one Ph.D. should have attained partial enlightenment, but as we know this does not happen at all. So being a superscholar is not the answer.

The contemplative traditions of Buddhism, such as the Tibetan and Zen traditions, emphasize practice very strongly and see study as something that should go side by side with it. Here the idea of learning is that

it is a process of new discovery, new scientific discovery, which is actual experience. There is a tremendous difference between putting something under a microscope, actually seeing it with your own eyes, and just purely analyzing the topic. Anything can be analyzed, but if you have no experience of it there is no basis for analysis. So the idea in the contemplative tradition is that one should have some basic training in meditation practice, however primitive it may be, and then begin to work on the intellectual aspect. This way the teaching is treated as a confirmation of experience rather than purely as a bank of information.

Question: Could you explain this tendency in us to be satisfied with theory instead of being freer and more open in terms of actual experience?

Rinpoche: I suppose the main tendency might be the tendency to make secure what we are doing. You see, on the whole, practice is a sloppy job. You have to accept that you have been a fool and start with being foolish. For instance, in the beginning, deciding to try the practice of meditation is just leaping to some conclusion about what to do. And even in doing the practice at the beginning, rather than really meditating, you just imagine you are meditating. So to begin with, the whole thing is based on confusion and confusion is accepted as part of the path. And since the situation is very loose and unorganized, it is as though you are leaping into unknown territory. A lot of people find that very frightening. You are not quite sure what you are involved with. But that is the only way to get into the practice. Being a fool then becomes a stepping-stone. The foolishness wears itself out and the thing behind the foolishness begins to peep through. It is like wearing out a shoe—your genuine feet begin to appear from behind your shoe.

You see there is a tremendous amount of fear involved and so a certain amount of security is needed. This particular answer does not answer all your questions of security. It does not really promise anything, it just pushes you overboard. It points out the situation of needing security and being frightened of that situation. Once we step out of that concern for security and are willing to be raw and rugged, personal, as we are, somehow a certain relaxation takes place. We discover that the more we let go the more comes back to us, rather than that we lose our grip on anything. Then a real relationship to our situation begins to develop.

The great problem is that spiritual teachings have been used as a way of securing ourselves, gaining a higher level of stability in terms of ego. This is our inevitable starting point. We cannot ignore this or push it away. We must start with the mistakes and that is always a problem. There is the fear and need for security that makes acceptance of spontaneity extremely difficult. As it says in the *Dhammapada,* "He who knows he's a fool is a wise man indeed."

Form

We could begin by discussing the origin of all psychological problems, the origin of neurotic mind. This is a tendency to identify oneself with desires and conflicts related to a world outside. And the question is immediately there as to whether such conflicts actually exist externally or whether they are internal. This uncertainty solidifies the whole sense that a problem of some kind exists. What is real? What is not real? That is always our biggest problem. It is ego's problem.

The abhidharma, its whole contents with all the details, is based on the point of view of egolessness. When we talk about egolessness, that does not mean simply the absence of ego itself. It means also the absence of the projections of ego. Egolessness comes more or less as a by-product of seeing the transitory, transparent nature of the world outside. Once we have dealt with the projections of ego and seen their transitory and transparent nature, then ego has no reference point, nothing to relate to. So the notions of inside and outside are interdependent—ego began and its projections began. Ego managed to maintain its identity by means of its projections. When we are able to see the projections as nonsubstantial, ego becomes transparent correspondingly.

According to the abhidharma, ego consists, in one of its aspects, of eight kinds of consciousness. There are the six sense consciousnesses (thinking mind is regarded as a sixth sense). Then there is a seventh consciousness, which has the nature of ignorance, cloudiness, confusion. This cloudy mind is an overall structure which runs right through the six sense consciousnesses. Each sense consciousness relates to this cloudy situation of not knowing exactly what you are doing. The seventh consciousness is an absence of precision. It is very blind.

The eighth consciousness is what you could call the common ground or the unconscious ground of all this. It is the ground that makes it possible for all the other seven to operate. This ground is different from the basic ground of which I have sometimes spoken, which is the background of all of existence and contains samsara and nirvana both. The eighth consciousness is not as basic as that ground. It is a kind of secondary basic level where confusion has already begun; and that confusion provides an accommodation for the other seven consciousnesses to operate.

There is an evolutionary process which starts from this unconscious ground, the eighth consciousness. The cloudy consciousness arises from that and then the six sense consciousnesses. Even the six senses evolve in a certain order according to the level of experiential intensity of each of them. The most intense level is attained with sight which develops last.

These eight types of consciousness can be looked at as being on the level of the first of the five skandhas, form. They are the form of ego, the tangible aspect of it. They constitute the ultimate grounding element of ego—as far as ego's grounding goes; which is not very far. Still, from a relative point of view, they do comprise something fixed, something definite.

I think to place this in perspective, it would be good to discuss briefly the basic ground—even though the abhidharma teaching does not talk very much about it—the all-prevading basic ground which we have just contrasted to the eighth consciousness. This basic ground does not depend on relative situations at all. It is natural being which just is. Energies appear out of this basic ground and those energies are the source of the development of relative situations. Sparks of duality, intensity, and sharpness, flashes of wisdom and knowledge—all sorts of things come out of the basic ground. So the basic ground is the source of confusion and also the source of liberation. Both liberation and confusion are that energy which happens constantly, which sparks out and then goes back to its basic nature, like clouds (as Milarepa described it) emerging from and disappearing back into the sky.

As for ego's type of ground, the eighth consciousness, that arises when the energy which flashes out of the basic ground brings about a sort of blinding effect, bewilderment. That bewilderment becomes the eighth consciousness, the basic ground for ego. Dr. Herbert Guenther calls it "bewilderment-errancy." It is error that comes out of being bewildered—a kind of panic. If the energy were to go along with its own

process of speed, there would be no panic. It is like driving a car fast; if you go along with the speed, you are able to maneuver accordingly. But if you suddenly panic with the thought that you have been going too fast without realizing it, you jam on the brakes and probably have an accident. Something suddenly freezes and brings the bewilderment of not knowing how to conduct the situation. Then actually the situation takes you over. Rather than just being completely one with the projection, the projection takes you over. Then the unexpected power of the projection comes back to you as your own doing, which creates extremely powerful and impressive bewilderment. That bewilderment acts as the basic ground, the secondary basic ground of ego, away from the primordial basic ground.

So ego is the ultimate relative, the source of all the relative concepts in the whole samsaric world. You cannot have criteria, notions of comparison, without ego. Things begin from ego's impression of relativity. Even nirvana begins that way. When ego began, nirvana, the other side of the same coin, began also. Without ego, there could be no such thing as nirvana or liberation, since a free state without relativity would be the case. So as ego develops, freedom and imprisonment begin to exist; and that relative situation contains the basic quality of ignorance.

The abhidharma does not talk very much about ignorance in the fundamental sense of ignoring oneself, but understanding this adds a further dimension to the teaching of the eight consciousnesses. Once there is bewilderment, then a sort of double take begins to happen of wanting to find out where you were, what you are, where you are at. But the nature of the bewilderment is that you do not want to go back and find out your original situation, you do not want to undo everything and go back. Since, with the bewilderment, you have created something to latch on to, you want to ignore the case history that led to that altogether. You want to make the best of the present moment and cling to it. That is the ignoring—refusing to go back because it is too painful, too frightening. As they say, "Ignorance is bliss." Ignoring of ignoring is bliss, at least from ego's point of view.

This understanding of ignorance comes from the mahamudra teaching of the vajrayana tradition. The difference between the abhidharma and basic sutra teachings on ignorance and the more direct and daring mahamudra teaching is that the sutra and abhidharma teaching relates to ignorance as a one-way process—bewilderment and grasping and the

six sense consciousnesses develop and ignorance takes over. But in the vajrayana teaching, ignorance is seen not only from the angle of the development of ego, but also as containing the potential for wisdom. This is not mentioned at all in the lower teachings. But within the eight consciousnesses, including the six sense consciousnesses, there actually is the possibility of ignorance turning into wisdom. This is a key point because wisdom cannot be born from theory, it must be born from your actual state of mind which is the working basis for all spiritual practice.

The wisdom of dealing with situations as they are, and that is what wisdom is, contains tremendous precision that could not come from anywhere else but the physical situations of sight, smell, feelings, touchable objects, and sounds. The earthy situation of actual things as they are is the source of wisdom. You can become completely one with smell, with sight, with sound, and your knowledge *about* them ceases to exist; your knowledge becomes wisdom. There is nothing to know about things as an external educational process. You become completely one with them; complete absorption takes place with sounds, smells, sights, and so on. This approach is at the core of the mandala principle of the vajrayana teaching. At the same time, the great importance given to the six sense consciousnesses in the abhidharma has a similar concrete significance in its application to the practice of meditation and a person's way of relating to his experiences. Both levels of teaching put tremendous emphasis on direct relationship with the down-to-earth aspect of experience.

Question: Can you say more about how the six senses connect up with meditation?

Rinpoche: The implication of the abhidharma teaching on the six senses for the practice of meditation is identifying yourself with sounds, touchable objects, feelings, breathing, and so on. The only way to develop sound meditative technique is to take something ordinary and use that. Unless you take something simple, the whole state of mind of your meditation will be based on the conflict of what is real and what is not and your relationship to that. This brings all kinds of complications and one begins to interpret these complications as psychological problems, neurotic problems, and to develop a sort of paranoid frame of mind in which what is going on represents to one much more than is actually there. So the whole idea is to start by relating to nonduality on a practical level, to step out of these paranoid conflicts of who in us is control-

ling whom. We should just get into actual things, sights and sounds as they are. A basic part of the tradition of meditation is using the sense perceptions as a way of relating with the earth. They are sort of middlemen for dealing with the earth. They contain neither good nor bad, are connected with neither spirituality nor samsara, nor anything at all. They are just neutral.

Question: Ignorance seems to take on different values at different times, if I understand you. Could you explain that further?

Rinpoche: Ignorance is an evolutionary process. It does not just happen as one bulk, so to speak, but develops and grows like a plant. You have a seed and then manure; then the plant grows and finally blossoms. As we have said, the beginning of that ignorance is bewilderment, panic. It is the ultimate panic, which does not even contain fear. Being just pure panic, it transcends fear. It is something very meditative in that sense, almost spiritual—a spiritual absorption. It is that profound; it comes right from the depths of your very being. That ignorance is the seed of what you are. It is fundamental, neutral, without any concepts or ideas of any kind. Just pure panic, 100 percent panic. From this, the cloudiness develops as an aftereffect. It is like when you get hit and then you get dizzy afterward.

Question: When you speak of "things as they are," do you mean completely without projections? It is at least theoretically possible to experience things without projections, isn't it? The reason I ask is because if there is an overwhelming quality to experiencing things as they are, then that sense of overwhelmingness would be a projection, wouldn't it?

Rinpoche: It is definitely possible to experience things without projections. But just things as they are would not be overwhelming. That is dualistic. There would be no quality of overwhelming because overwhelming means "who has got control over whom." So the question of overwhelmingness does not arise at all.

Seeing things as they are is very, very plain. Because it is so plain, it is colorful and precise. There is no game involved, therefore it is more precise, clearer. It does not need any relative supports; it does not call for any comparisons. That is why the individuality of things is then seen more precisely—because there is no need to compare anything to anything. You see the merit of each situation in its own right, as it is.

Question: Is not the student of abhidharma always playing a game

then, intellectually assuming a nondualistic point of view and then using that to actually work through duality?

Rinpoche: That is not so much the case with the abhidharma. I would say that is more true of working with the shunyata principle according to the middle way or Madhyamaka school of Buddhism. This is a philosophy which developed after the abhidharma. Another example would be the koan practices in the Rinzai tradition of Zen where the meditation involves trying to use a certain kind of logic which is apparently illogical. But it *is* a logic of its kind because it is illogical. Using the koan again and again exhausts the mind's habitual thinking and takes one off the road somehow. There is a sudden experience of the futility and childishness of trying to apply ordinary logic, and that is where the gap or satori comes. In that case it is using a kind of logic of nonduality dualistically in order to destroy dualism.

On the other hand, the abhidharma merely presents some first idea of the pattern of duality. It is like a philosophy of meditation. By explaining the psychological pattern, it tells why meditation is valid.

Question: With regard to the eight consciousnesses—does it make sense to try to have a direct experience of any one of them isolated from the rest, or is this too abstract a way of going about it?

Rinpoche: I think that is too abstract. You cannot deal with them purely individually. It is like looking at a person: if you look at a person from the point of view of how fat or how thin he or she is, you still cannot fail to see also that person's head and toes and what clothes he or she is wearing. So in looking at experience from one perspective, you see the rest as well. Once we experience one sense consciousness, then what gives that particular sense consciousness the quality of consciousness relates it to the others. Each sense consciousness, to a certain extent, contains the overall picture. It must be what it is in relation to some background; it must breathe some air to survive. It is like seeing a flower growing—when you see the flower, you also see the ground it is growing out of.

Question: Is everything we experience within the basic ignorance, within the eighth consciousness, including wisdom or higher states of meditation?

Rinpoche: Yes. That is precisely why the whole thing is hopeful, precisely why it is worthwhile looking into our state of mind.

Question: So then higher states of meditation don't blank out the six senses, for example?

Rinpoche: Not at all. Of course not. In fact, the six sense consciousnesses are heightened. If we regard meditation as just getting into a fog so that you do not see, you do not feel, something is terribly wrong. In that case meditation would reduce one to a zombie. The enlightened man would have to be rescued. Someone would have to feed him and take him to the bathroom. We would have to have an enlightenment ward.

Question: Rinpoche, you spoke of ignorance as not being willing to go back. What is the way back; is it meditation?

Rinpoche: One is not willing to trace back how one came to be ignorant. But actually one cannot go back literally. One does not really have to go back. Rather one discovers what one was by the process of going more deeply into the present situation. That is the difference between an intuitive approach and an intellectual one. You can go back intellectually, but that does not help; you remain stuck in the same point of view. The whole idea is that if you are able to realize what you are at the present moment, you do not need to try to go back. What you are at this moment contains the whole message of what you were. That is really the practice of nonduality in meditation—seeing your present situation and going with it, identifying with the particular sense experiences of sight, smell, and so on. Just experience the simplicity of them.

Question: I don't understand the first skandha. It seems it would be more basic than experience itself if it is more basic than the second and third skandhas of feeling and perception and the rest of them.

Rinpoche: The first skandha of form is basic, yes. Feeling and perception and the rest of the skandhas are built out of that basic thing. They are different types of attributes of form, so to speak, that are around it.

Question: Is there any activity within that world of form? It seems to me that the most basic activities I ever experience begin with feeling.

Rinpoche: No, what you are talking about is what you might call "facade experience." Fundamental experience begins with relativity, with the notion of comparison, which means ego and its projections. You cannot experience anything without a somebody to experience it and that is the starting point. That somebody is an unknown person, but experiencing it feels good. That is ignorance and the ego.

Question: So the first step is naming and labeling in order to begin experiencing yourself.

Rinpoche: Yes, yes—one's own position. The starting point of comparison.

Question: What is a skandha?

Rinpoche: Skandha means "heap." It is a collection, pile. That means it is not an independent definite object like a brick, but a collection of a lot of little details and aspects of psychological inclinations of different types. For instance, the second skandha, feeling, is not solid, not one feeling. It contains all sorts of feelings. The third skandha, perception, is the same—it is a collection. So ego is made out of a lot of particles rather than being one fixed thing that keeps going on.

Question: You say that the six sense consciousnesses are in the first skandha, the skandha of form. In the ordinary understanding, when one speaks of the senses one is already talking about perception; and yet perception is the third skandha.

Rinpoche: The senses are connected with perception; but there is more grasping and holding on involved in perception proper. Just the pure senses are very simple, mechanical almost.

Question: Could you give us a concrete example showing how the skandhas come into play—form, feeling, perception, and so on? Something simple—for example, if I see a car.

Rinpoche: The process that takes place here takes place in a fraction of a second of consciousness, that lasts something like a five-hundredth of a second. First you have an impression of something. It is blank, nothing definite. Then you try to relate to it as *something* and all the names that you have been taught come back to you and you put a label on that thing. You brand it with that label and then you know your relationship to it. You like it or you dislike it, depending on your association of it with the past.

Now the very, very first blank, which may last a millionth of a second, is the meditation experience of the primordial ground. Then the next instant there is a question—you do not know who and what and where you are. The next moment is a faint idea of finding some relationship. Then you immediately send your message back to memory, to the associations you have been taught. You find the particular category or

the particular label you have been taught and you stamp it on. Then at once you have your strategy of how to relate with that in terms of liking it or disliking it. This whole process happens very quickly. It just flashes into place.

Question: Are all five skandhas in there?

Rinpoche: All five will be there, though I did not describe them all.

Question: Could you say more about the cloudy mind and the difference between the eighth consciousness, the seventh, and the six sense consciousnesses?

Rinpoche: We begin with the eighth consciousness, the background, and then the seventh is kind of a way of relating the eighth consciousness to the six sense consciousnesses. But it is a very random way of relating because you no longer have any sense of direction, you do not know how to proceed. If sight comes first or sound or smell—it just happens to you. You are just insensate, just crawling along. The seventh consciousness is more intelligent than the eighth, than the basic ignorance, but you are still only sleepwalking, almost awake but not quite.

Question: Is that at all like when you find yourself walking in the garden and you hadn't realized you were there? You've done something without realizing it?

Rinpoche: Yes, it has actually been described that way. It is the subconscious feeling of a possible way of relating with the senses, but you have not quite worked it out properly yet. It happens in the midst of very precisely defined situations as well. It does not have to be a dreamy state at all. In those cases it is almost like the impact of the first bewilderment is coming to life again. But it still has a certain tinge of the dreamy quality and a potential of the six sense consciousnesses in it. It is a sort of no-man's-land that you go through.

Question: Is this state characterized by a sense of tension between opposites, such as when for a minute you are confused between sweet and bitter? You are vacillating back and forth between the two and then you realize that the taste is just what it is?

Rinpoche: That sounds like when you have already gotten to the sense consciousnesses. But at the beginning you are not sure, you are just feeling around it. The seventh consciousness is like putting something in your mouth; chewing and tasting is on the level of the six senses.

Feeling

WE SHOULD PERHAPS go on to the next state—the second skandha, feeling. Feeling consists of the pleasurable and the painful. In the usual psychology of people, pleasurable experiences are related to as positive and creative, and painful experiences are related to as negative and destructive. This development of relating to things in terms of positive or negative value is an extension of the basic pattern of ego established by form, the first skandha. Having already the basic form, something definite and solid to hold on to, we go a little beyond that to trying to identify that form as friend or enemy, hostile or welcoming. This has the effect of solidifying whatever it is even further as something that defines ego's position by implication. Form provides a background which is composed of rudimentary names and concepts—positivity, good feeling, godliness, cleanliness, beauty, power, and so on on the one hand; and the negative, painful, evil, dirty, destructive, and so on on the other hand. The first is connected with birth, the second with death. These dualistic criteria, or others such as hot and cold, are the starting point for feeling. Feeling, in the sense of the second skandha, cannot function independently of them.

Feeling in this sense is something much more fundamental than just pure sensation. All kinds of concepts develop on the basis of feeling's basic dualism. Fundamentally it is of the nature of positive and negative, but feeling also has the third possibility of indifference.

The positivity and negativity of feeling is elaborated in terms of the mind/body situation. Feeling solidifies itself in terms of these two fields of experience. Feeling relates to mind as emotions and to body as clusters of instincts, things, thingness. Understanding of the mind/body pat-

tern of feeling is very important in connection with meditation. We can meditate either intellectually or intuitively. Meditation on the intellectual level is involved with the mind side of the mind/body; it is very imaginary. Intuitive meditation engages the body level of feeling, particular bodily sensations—pleasurable sensations, pain in the legs, hot and cold temperatures in the room, and so on.

Mind is the emotional, imaginary, or dream quality. And body, in this case, is also a quality of mind. That is, we do not, in feeling, experience body as it is. We experience *our version* of body. The fundamental point of view of ego based on comparative criteria, the definite separation between this and that, is already operational at this point. That basic twist is already there with the first skandha, form. The unobstructed space of things as they are is already distorted by the time we get to feeling. We cannot help anyway working along with this situation as naive people confronted by what has happened already. Still, looked at from a very basic point of view, the whole involvement of feeling is very childish. In fact, when we really see it, we see it is fundamentally deceptive.

When we talk about feeling, we usually think in terms of feeling toward someone else: you fall in love with someone, you are angry with someone. In that imagery the other person is all-important and you are insignificant. On the other hand, you feel slighted or you want to be loved. In that case you are all-important and the others are insignificant. Feeling plays that introvert-extrovert game of making itself important by reflecting off of "other." But in reality all that is very remote. Nobody is actually involved but yourself. You are alone and are creating the whole game by yourself.

So understanding feeling is very revealing about how you relate with things. Feeling involves the pretense that you are involved with somebody; but actually you are just beating your own head against a wall. You constantly search further and further thinking you are going to get at something, but ultimately, you are still beating your head against a wall. There is no answer to feeling's search, no savior for it.

That is why the buddhadharma is an atheistic teaching. We have to accept that ours is a lonely journey. Studying the second skandha of feeling can be extremely important in helping us to realize that the whole journey is made alone, independent of anybody else. Still we are trying to beat ourselves against something all the time.

So to return to the mind/body development of feeling, the mind

aspect of it provides tremendous resources for this delusive process, inexhaustible sources of dreaming and imagining. This extends to the situation of using drugs such as LSD and others which can produce all kinds of seemingly visionary and creative experiences. Experiences of perpetual unfolding of sight, smell, sound—beautiful like the continuous unfolding of a flower—can be produced. This kind of feeling on the mind level—in ordinary situations, in the drug experience, in meditation—provides all kinds of occasions for dwelling on spiritual materialism. Spiritual materialism means relating to experiences in terms of their possible benefit to ego, which is a quality of all the skandhas. Spiritual materialism tends to associate anything to do with spirituality with a dream world or heaven, with something that has nothing to do with the body situation, with something that altogether bypasses the kitchen sink.

The body aspect of feeling is associated with actual relationship with things. This element becomes much more vivid in the next skandha, perception, which we will discuss further on. This experience of actual things, thingness, of solidity and stability—as I have already said, this is not solidity and stability as it is, but our version of it. We *think* it is solid, we *think* it is thing. Still, relating with this body aspect of feeling is spiritually very provocative and open.

Suppose suddenly we get sick and feel pain in our body. The body is a thing made out of all kinds of things; therefore pain in us makes us feel a relationship with actual reality rather than imagining anything beyond it. Of course in this kind of situation there is always the likelihood that somebody will come sit by our bed and read us prayers of how beautiful the beyond would be if we could only get out of this shameful, raw physical situation. Talking about the beauties of heaven and spirituality, the person hopes to get us drunk on it and get our mind off the bodily situation of pain. But that does not work. Once we are into the world of imagination in which we can imagine how beautiful beyond-the-body could be, we are also connecting up with the imagination of how terrible the pain could become. We are lost in the world of wishful thinking or unwanted thoughts. Somehow relating directly with the body aspect of feeling goes much more in the direction of what is.

Question: I really don't understand. In the beginning you said that feeling could only function independently if it had concepts to work with, to relate itself to. Then right after that, when you mentioned mind

and body, I thought right away that these are the concepts it's relating itself to in order to be independent. Is that true?

Rinpoche: Well, the feeling happens with the concept, but as it happens that whole movement becomes bewildering and the concept does not apply any more. Actually pain and pleasure, apart from the second skandha, just happen. They have nothing to do with concepts or criteria at all. Pain or pleasure does not have to be a comparative thing. There could be independent pain, independent pleasure. We can afford to experience pain and pleasure without feeling. Many people might feel this is extremely demonic, that if there are no strings attached, if feeling does not have to be connected to concepts, you might be experiencing that through destroying or hurting people. But this fear on the part of people of the demonic aspect of themselves comes from being afraid of an unknown situation. They are afraid of that space because they have not seen the other aspect of it that is without hope or fear. Once they get a glimpse of the possibility of pain and pleasure without hope and fear, they see it as demonic. Of course there is nothing to latch on to there. If you take away the hope and fear, then pain and pleasure remains as it is. There is no way of relating with it except directly.

Question: So mind and body—one is not pain and the other pleasure, but both are sort of organs of pain and pleasure? Is that it?

Rinpoche: Well, yes. But at the same time mind is more closely connected with pleasure, because mind invites imagination. It invites imagination about what might be good, it is hopeful about possibilities of gaining something. But body is very much down-to-earth; it constantly brings us back to what we have to face. It's like the difference between taking the whole family to the theater or movies, which is the mind situation, and when we come back home and have to clean up our old dishes and cook a meal, which is the body situation.

Question: Rinpoche, I don't understand, because it seems that the imagination is just as inclined, in fact probably more inclined, toward the imagination of pain than the imagination of pleasure.

Rinpoche: Well, you see, the whole point is that imagining pain and pleasure as a solid thing is not very appealing. But on the other hand, imagining pain and pleasure as a floating situation is much more appealing, because you can turn pain into pleasure in your imagination. You see the difference? In other words, nobody likes to face reality. The reality is physical, the body, the form of the first skandha that we created at

the beginning. We have a body, "I am what I am." It's like an individual God-consciousness. Once you have that thing, "I am what I am," then it becomes very solid.

Question: So physical pain, then, could be translated into pleasure if it is seen as strengthening the "I am"?

Rinpoche: All pain for that matter. You see, all sorts of double-crosses can take place. You are sitting down to meditate and you say to yourself, "I'm going to do it for twenty hours starting right now; and whatever physical pain comes up is fine. It will be part of it. Okay, let it come through. Let it happen all along. That will be okay." And each time when pain comes you feel that you are overcoming the possessiveness of ego by feeling that particular pain. But in actual fact, by the time you finish your twenty hours of meditation, your ego has been strengthened because you feel that you worked so hard and you faced so much. You have been double-crossed by ego.

Question: Is it possible to purify the feelings so that movement toward what is true feels good and movement toward what is not true does not feel good?

Rinpoche: The question is whether or not we see that there is no point in playing the game of feeling which is the second skandha. If we see that, we are not concerned by that or this anymore. We go along very boldly, in a very stubborn way—we just sail along. We have our own plow, our own tank, and we are going to drive right along. Whether we are confronted by a house, a shop, or a supermarket, we are going to drive right on through. The whole point seems to be whether or not we have that bold attitude of being what we are and are willing to disregard the duality of that and this. We accept our negative side and the fact we are a fool. Okay—that's fine. We use it as part of the meditation process. Nevertheless we are going to go on and on and on being ashamed or being proud of it. But we are just going to go on and on and on.

Question: Rinpoche, I wonder if I've misunderstood. Are there basically four kinds of feeling, bodily pleasurable and painful and mind pleasurable and painful?

Rinpoche: There seem to be, on one hand, pleasurable and painful feelings and, on the other hand, bodily and mental-type feelings. The bodily feelings seem to be very complicated in a sense or very subtle, because it is very difficult to relate with a particular bodily pleasure or pain. This is because so much imagination is involved. To put it in terms

of a very simple metaphor, the mind aspect of feeling is like being high on marijuana or LSD; and the body aspect is like being high on school. The first is highly imaginary, the second is rather earthy but at the same time emotional. So it's like two kinds of intoxication—high on chemicals, high on yeast. Feeling has all kinds of variations—more than four. Pain, pleasure, or indifference could be friend or enemy, mental or physical.

You see, all human experience is high on something. Whether we regard ourselves as sober or not, we are constantly drunk, drunk on one thing or another, drunk on imagination or drunk on conflicts on the bodily level. Otherwise we could not survive. So we could say that this idea of feeling is different kinds of intoxication. You are intoxicated with good and bad: intoxicated with good, godliness, spirituality, pleasure; intoxicated with bad, evil, destruction, pain. You are intoxicated in imagination—all sorts of imaginations are going on. You are intoxicated in the body in that you are irritated by that and this and therefore you would like to get revenge by imposing yourself on something, laying your trip on something. The whole thing, all of experience, is being intoxicated on something. That is a very important and revealing aspect of this question of feeling, of this second stage in the development of the skandhas. The first skandha is ignorance, bewilderment, confusion, and vague name and form. In the second one, already having some vague concept of where you stand, you would like to lay trips on something. This is what the feeling that happens—good and bad, body and mind—is about.

Question: Is every feeling dualistic?

Rinpoche: If it's based on something, some concept or wishful thinking. You see, every feeling of that sort must have a target in terms of this and that, of this in relation to that. This where I begin and that where I want to get to. As long as feelings are involved with this and that, that is duality. In other words, in relating to this and that, you have no way at all of relating with yourself. You have lost yourself altogether because you are so fascinated with this and that.

Question: You talked about the lonely journey and said that everything we do with other people is just projections, chasing our projections. So why do we need to relate with other people? It seems the obvious solution is just not to relate.

Rinpoche: "Why" and "why not" are saying the same thing. Do you see what I mean? "Why so" and "why not" are the same thing. So then, why don't we just plunge in?

Question: I seemed to understand that earthly intoxication is better than heavenly? Is bodily feeling, then, somehow more helpful?

Rinpoche: I think so, yes. Like the situation of a fistfight or making love—that kind of boiling situation brings you very much into the present moment.

Question: Rinpoche, you speak of a heavenly trip which tries to elude pain, move away from the down-to-earth situation, and say that this is associated with pleasure. Is there a kind of intoxication which transcends the duality of pain and pleasure?

Rinpoche: I think so, but that is not associated with heaven; that transcends heaven in the sense of that which is above as opposed to you below experiencing it. As long as you relate to heaven above and you down below, you do not experience it properly, you do not transcend. But when you see that heaven is below or that it is nowhere, that is the point where you transcend the whole process. That becomes an open and ultimate state, because then you are relating with the primordial ground. The primordial ground contains everything without being based on the relative situations of good and bad, this and that.

Perception

FEELING'S RELATING PROCESS consists of extremes, of polarities, of dichotomies. In other words, one cannot develop feelings unless there are two extremes of some kind. Following from that, because of having some sense of taking sides with this extreme as opposed to that extreme, the subtleties of feeling have a solid, grasping quality in dealing with the projection of the world outside, rather than responding purely and directly. It is like a personal relationship with somebody which is based solely on temperamental reactions. As we know, there has to be something more than that, otherwise the relationship will not last very long. But feeling is like that. Feelings have a bouncy quality of jumping from one extreme to another. Having already the basic qualities of form, one starts to relate, to insert oneself into certain situations, into the two extremes of good and bad, pain and pleasure, body and mind, and so on. It is like in rock climbing when you insert a metal peg. That is the feeling. But to continue the climbing you have to have rope running through that peg. The rope that you have to have running through the pegs is perception, the third skandha. Perception is necessary so that the two extremes have something continuing underneath as a common link, a common thread that runs between happiness and sadness of body and mind.

Perception is based on that which is manifested by form and feeling and that which is not manifested by them. These are the two basic qualities in perception. In the first case, something is manifested via the six sense organs. You perceive something and you relate to it; you hold on to certain senses and their perceptions, and then from there you relate with that content. That is the first touching and feeling process. Feeling

is like a radiation radiating out. Within that radiation, perception takes place as the radiation begins to function as definite details of that and this.

In this case "feeling" is not quite our ordinary notion of feeling. It is not the feeling we take so seriously as, for instance, when we say, "He hurt my feelings." This kind of feeling that we take so seriously belongs to the fourth and fifth skandhas of concept and consciousness. Here, in the case of the second skandha, it is the immediate, impulsive type of feeling of jumping to certain conclusions and trying to attach oneself to them. Perception could be called another type of feeling, the deepened feeling of experiencing that which is manifested and that which is not manifested in terms of the solid bodily situation.

You see, the whole idea of the manifested or the nonmanifested here comes from freezing space in our way of dealing with situations. Primordial consciousness flashes out, the unconscious flashes out, which creates tremendous open space. Within that space, ignorance and energy develop as we discussed before. Immediately then, when ego begins to take up its position through the action of the skandhas, there is a natural automatic tendency to relate to that open space as overcrowded. Ego tries to possess that open space, that awakened state, by overcrowding it. But it can't overcrowd it with a lot of stuff, because there isn't enough stuff at that point; ego is not yet fully developed with all its resources of imagination. It is still the first impulsive situation of ego's development, so in order to crowd that space, one tries to freeze the whole space into a solid block. It's like water freezing into ice. The space itself is regarded as a solid thing of ego. In other words, the principle of shunyata and nothingness, emptiness and openness, the awake state, is automatically in itself regarded as a sleep state, as overcrowded space. That kind of freezing of the space starts at the level of form, continues with feeling, and now manifests fully with perception.

Perception, in the sense of the third skandha, cannot exist without solidness, without solidifying. That is the manifestation aspect. The nonmanifestation aspect is the aspect of annihilation, giving up all hope of retaining any kind of ground, which is based on fear. The first is hope, the second fear. The manifestation, physical manifestation, the solidified content of perception, is based on hope. And the second aspect, nonmanifestation, is based on despair (disappear). That works by, when there is

no hope of maintaining solid ground anymore, making that position of despair into solid ground.

A third and fourth aspect of perception after manifestation and nonmanifestation are involved with criteria again. The criteria here concern how much area the grasping of perception can cover. Ego is extending its territory as far as it can, that is, trying to label and define as much as it can. Automatically the notions of big and small, greater and less, develop. Even the notion of smaller can help define more ground. So these polarities develop.

Then the fifth aspect of perception is absolute nothingness. Absolute nothingness in this case could be said to be a spark of intelligence coming through, connected with the primordial ground. There was a dispute on that subject between scholars of two schools of thought. One school said it was a spark of intelligence coming through. The other said that it was still confusion, that there could be no question of awakened intelligence in the skandhas; at this state of perception there could be no hope of freeing oneself at all. But, in my view and as I have been taught, there is a possibility of a complete change in one's perspective in relation to perception. An experience of absolute nothingness means giving up even hope itself or fear itself, and no longer perceiving in terms of grasping or clinging on to something. In that experience you are just trying to be brave enough to let go of your grasping a little to just feel around openly a bit in local areas, float around a little bit. So that aspect of perception means beginning to be pretty brave. This sort of bravery comes from tathagatagarbha, buddha nature, the basic intelligence. It is the basic intelligence that begins to show this bravery. On the whole, any notion of exploring or taking a chance in relating with one's ego and projections is regarded as inspired by the enlightened mind. That is because you are not trying to hold on, to continue something, to prove something, but you are looking at other possibilities. That in itself is a very brave attitude and a very spacious one, because your mind is completely charged with curiosity and interest and space and questions. It is a sort of wandering process and is very hopeful and very positive in this particular connection. This absolute nothingness is the last stage of development of perception.

On the whole, the relationship between perception and the previous skandhas is that form creates the ego and ignorance and basic things, and feeling brings the spike quality or sharpness within that, of something

trying to maintain itself. The perception comes as extending ego's territory and trying to define its position even much more. There is in perception a lot of referring back to the central headquarters of ego and then extending and exploring further and further always in relation back to it. This establishment of territory in relation to a central reference point seems to be the general pattern of the development of ego.

Question: I only got four developments in perception. Manifestation, nonmanifestation.

Rinpoche: Big is the third one, and small is the fourth. The fifth is absolute nothingness.

Question: Could you go over nonmanifestation again?

Rinpoche: It has to do with fear. It is based on the fear of not having a solid situation anymore. Solidified space is hope. It is hopeful in that you manage to solidify the space as something to hang on to. In nonmanifestation, you have found nothing, and there is complete despair and giving up hope. But that is in itself a double-cross of ego, because giving up hope is in itself clinging to something.

Question: So in the case of manifestation I'm very taken up by the things I can see around me, whereas in nonmanifestation I'm more occupied by the things that I can't see that I wish were there.

Rinpoche: By the frustration of it. In nonmanifestation you are occupied with the frustration of not having what you want.

Question: And those two, hope and fear, would continually re-create each other?

Rinpoche: Yes, definitely. Wherever there is hope there is also survival of hope, which is based on fear. Maintenance of the hope is based on the fear of its nonfulfillment.

Question: What's the difference between big and small? Big and small what?

Rinpoche: The third and fourth ones are just two polarities. It is connected with outside and inside—expanding your vision outward and exploring, deepening your vision inward. Certain scholars in Tibet have spoken of perception as "hungry perception." It is dying to look for new material to eat up. It is constantly looking for possibilities for hanging on to something. The development of big and small particularly corresponds to this hungry notion of perception. Perception is much hungrier than feeling, because feeling is already partly secured. In the case of feel-

ing, we have a form, a solid thing, and then we radiate out from the form, we extend and stretch ourselves, exploring very gently, very gently. But when we reach the level of perception, this sort of forced gentility begins to wear out and we become a bit desperate.

Question: Would these five parts of perception ever be simultaneous or are they separate psychological stages?

Rinpoche: It seems that they are separate psychological stages because you can concentrate on only one at a time. You see, the five skandhas are a very evolutionary thing. Form and feeling can manifest by themselves quite spontaneously, but when we get to perception and samskara, there are more and more separate things involved.

Question: I don't understand the evolutionary quality. I thought that all the skandhas had to work together, so that even though we speak of form first, it's not possible without perception, for example.

Rinpoche: That is true also, yes.

Question: You said form and feeling can exist on their own, but in order for there to be form, don't you have to perceive it?

Rinpoche: Yes, you definitely have to. What's wrong?

Question: Well, you say, "that comes later on" or "when we get to such-and-such skandha" as if that was the order of being, that we form and then we feel and then we perceive. But aren't they happening simultaneously?

Rinpoche: Well, it depends on our notion of time, of "simultaneously." We described the other day how the first stage of ego and its extensions develop by thousandths of a second. In that way, the whole thing develops by stages. But on that time scale, you could also say they happen simultaneously. So that process happens simultaneously or progressively. There is a beginning and an end, but the application of notions of time becomes rugged and crude here. When we get to the level of consciousness, the last skandha, it becomes cruder still. That last skandha contains form and feeling and perception and samskara; but as far as the way of flashing is concerned, there is the evolutionary pattern. The first flash is the form and the next, feeling. As you flash further and further, the content becomes more and more involved. When you flash perception, that contains feeling and form; when you flash consciousness that contains all the other four.

Question: So the first flash of seeing something hasn't reached the stage of perception yet because it's without feeling?

Rinpoche: The first flash is just blank. Then a question, then an answer, then solidifying that and relating to it in terms of love and hate and so on. But very quickly, in a fraction of a second.

Question: Is it possible to continue to exist without this process? It seems if that would stop, I would be in great danger.

Rinpoche: That is what you think. There are people who have managed to do without it. After all, all this information about this pattern of the five skandhas comes from the point of view of those who have seen it from above, from an aerial view. It is not necessary to go through these complicated patterns of skandhas. It would be extremely simple not to go through them anymore. You do not have to keep giving birth to the whole process. You can just perceive and go along with that perception, whatever arises.

Question: Is that kind of perception you were just talking about outside the ego's confine?

Rinpoche: Well, that becomes inspiration. Outside the ego, perception becomes inspiration. But that is getting onto the tantric level, which may be too difficult to understand.

Question: Inspiration for what?

Rinpoche: For that. Itself.

Question: It seems that there are hints of tantric teachings in all of this.

Rinpoche: Of course, yes; if it were without connection to the earlier teachings, tantra would be a solitary planet. Actually some of the details of tantric iconography are developed from abhidharma. Different colors and feelings of this particular consciousness, that particular emotion, are manifested in a particular deity wearing such-and-such a costume, of certain particular colors, holding certain particular scepters in his hand. Those details are very closely connected with the individualities of particular psychological processes.

Question: If you understand the abhidharma really clearly you can get into tantra, then?

Rinpoche: Yes, that is what happens. Actually a great deal of the tantric symbolism, the mandala, for example, is based on the terminology of the abhidharma. It runs right through. The abhidharma is a way of seeing; the psychology that it describes is not just a lump sum, a theoretical generality. There is individuality in every aspect of human emotion, human psychology. It is very rich. Each aspect of mind has its own individuality, and as you go along further and further, deeper and deeper,

you begin to see these individual aspects as really living forces. At that point you also lose ego, because you no longer have to label experiencing as one big lump sum of "me" and "mine" and "I" anymore. That has become useless, absurd.

Question: Does one identify with these details? Is there a technique of identification happening?

Rinpoche: Well, if you identify with all these details going on in personal experience, that is very much a shortcut. You don't have to look for outside answers, because answers are there already. It happens on a personal level.

Question: What is the process when you say "identify with something"? Say I'm sawing a piece of wood, and I remember to identify with that, is it somehow like putting my mind on my hand? How does this fit in with the skandhas? Is it like connecting the sixth or the seventh or the eighth type of consciousness with the visual consciousness?

Rinpoche: You are quite right to raise that question. It is quite dangerous actually when we talk about identifying. You could identify outwardly with things as they are, so there is no center, but just fringe everywhere, expansion everywhere. Or you could identify inwardly, that is, you could identify with things that are happening with yourself as a solid entity.

Identification should be open identification, centerless identification, in other words, without a watcher. That is the whole point. If there is no watcher, then identification becomes real identification, really making a connection with things as they are. Whereas if you identify inwardly then you are identifying in accordance with some concept, in accordance with your own categories.

Question: Identifying inwardly would be connecting your mind with the thing?

Rinpoche: With the thing, a solidified notion, yes. That is what we call materialism, spiritual or psychological materialism.

Question: What is the other kind? Identifying outwardly is just being aware of what's happening, without any—

Rinpoche: Well, you are not watching your body and your physical motion of sawing wood, but you just become one with wood itself. You do not watch yourself being identified, but you become completely one with the action or object of what you are doing.

Question: What about when Buddha taught the woman at the well

how to feel the rope and attend to the motion of drawing water? What about the practice of mindfulness?

Rinpoche: That is like using the breathing in meditation, it is the motion of the two arms—as outsiders. It has nothing to do with me and my arms, but it is just two arms doing a regular functional thing—drawing up water.

Question: So there is nothing built up that way? No territory or sense of ownership?

Rinpoche: Nothing is built up that way. Breathing is just breathing happening there. It has nothing to do with *my* breathing, so that I should have to breathe specially.

Question: Becoming one with the wood, is that becoming intoxicated?

Rinpoche: We could say that, yes. Once you are in the experience there is some logical pattern to follow, which becomes a sort of perpetually creative process; you begin to see the colorfulness, the vividness of things.

Question: Could you explain the relationship between fear and identification?

Rinpoche: Well, identification is surrendering and not referring back; not checking back with central headquarters but just going on with what is there. Fear is referring back to yourself and making sure that your relationship with what is happening is quite secure. If you don't check up on yourself, you might have to panic. Suddenly you stop identifying because you fear something is wrong—you begin to lose your grip. This is because in identifying, the carpet of security is pulled out from under your feet.

Question: Rinpoche, you said that nonmanifestation is based on fear, whereas it seems to me that the quality of fear is a more solid thing than hope. I see something more spacious about hope than fear. I don't understand how nonmanifestation is based on fear.

Rinpoche: Well, nonmanifestation is based on fear in the sense that it becomes despair. Fear projects a situation in which there is nothing to hang on to and you have lost every contact, every connection; so you are dwelling on that—which is despair. It is creating another type of ground to hang on to, dwelling on fear, enjoying fear or sadness as an occupation.

Question: Why is there a problem about this fifth state of perception,

absolute nothingness, that some schools of Buddhism would consider this to be a cloudy mind or a clinging mind?

Rinpoche: I think there was tremendous distrust in the definition of the absolute, of absolute mind, buddha nature, and its intelligence. That connects with our previous discussion about viewing Buddha as a great scholar. From the point of view where being enlightened is being a great scholar, any kind of feeble intelligence or feeble inspiration is regarded as a manifestation of samsara. The people holding this view thought that in order to have a really good glimpse of the absolute you had to have fantastic dramatic flashes. They themselves had not had these experiences, but they imagined that should be the case. The other school, our school, says that awakened mind has to be something that is part of our everyday experience of ego. The experience of awakened mind is extremely simple; it does not have to be dramatic. The faintest expression of intelligence is part of the awakened state of mind. So you do not have to build up a mythical notion of enlightened experience. It is something realistic, and flashes of it happen constantly. That viewpoint also coincides with the tantric teachings.

Question: So all through these skandhas, the awakened state of mind is the thread that everything goes on, and somehow the complications built up by each skandha live on this thread which they obscure.

Rinpoche: That's right, that happens all the way along.

Question: So that the awakened state of mind is actually doing all the work that everything else is living on?

Rinpoche: Exactly, I mean even uprisings, agitation, aspects of living in the samsaric world like guerrilla warfare and political intrigues and everything—all are based on a fundamental sense that something is not right, and seeing that something is not right is based on intelligence.

Question: So doubt is intelligence.

Rinpoche: Doubt is intelligence, yes. That is really very powerful thinking actually. The chaos is intelligence and it is teaching. So you do not have to ward off anything at all.

Question: Could you say something about pure pleasure and pure pain isolated unto themselves? How could they exist outside the body or mind?

Rinpoche: They cannot exist outside the actual body and the actual mind, but they can exist outside our version of the body and our version of the mind. That is the most difficult thing of all—we say "body" and

we say "mind," but we have our own interpretation of them, our own concept of them, which constantly separates us from the reality of the body and mind, the bodyness, the mindness, the thingness of things as they are. This thingness of things as they are is what is called emptiness, shunyata, the actual isness quality of things. Things could be without us; they could remain pure and perfect as they are. But we put our own version over them, and we then amalgamate them all together. It is like dressing up dolls. We have the naked bodies and then we put on military costumes or monks' robes or an ordinary tie and suit. We dress them up. Then suddenly we find that they are alive. And we try to run away from them because they begin to chase us. We end up being haunted by our own desire and perceptions, because we put so much onto them. Finally our own creation becomes destructive to us.

Question: I really didn't understand what you said about freezing space.

Rinpoche: The basic ground is open ground, but you do not want to accept that. You want to solidify it to make it tangible, safe ground to walk on. So by freezing space, I mean solidifying that open space. There could be the experience of pain and pleasure as naked pain and naked pleasure without any problem of fixing them in relation to anything. We do not have to conquer our projections and our mind at all. We do not have to control anything. Things as they are can remain independent. Once situations are left open and fresh and naked, experience can become very flowing, real, living.

Question: Where do pure pain and pleasure come from in this pure, open situation?

Rinpoche: Well, they manifest by themselves. They are not dependent on anything. That is the whole point. We do not have to have a chain-reaction process. Each pain and pleasure can come as an independent package deal. The whole problem arises from relating with experience as something other than just what it is. Then it has to be maintained or controlled. If you have extreme spiritual pleasure, there is the possibility of losing it or its dying because you are trying to maintain it. But really you do not have to maintain it; it is an independent, self-sufficient experience. Therefore, in the tantric iconography, pain and pleasure and all these experiences have been described as divinities, independent persons dancing on lotus seats. They are independent beings. They are not being manipulated by remote control.

Question: When you talk about pain and pleasure in their pure state, I think that if I tried to relate to that I would end up on a trippy imagination jag, leaving out the earth of the situation. I would just go off on a mind trip.

Rinpoche: I think that you might well as long as you have the aim and object of trying to get pure pain and pleasure. When you have that idea in mind and try to go out and do it, then you have to do something extraordinary, either take an acid trip or freak out. And you never make it because you have the idea in mind already prepared. That means that ego planned it for you and sent you out with its consent.

Question: Suppose you had a little flash of intelligence and then saw the whole process of ego starting all over again, the ego panicking and falling into a hungry-ghost mentality, cutting yourself off from the very thing that you want. What do you do with that process?

Rinpoche: If you see it happening, that is the key point, and you find some spontaneous way of dealing with it. It is like learning to swim. If you are suddenly pushed into the water, you automatically swim; whereas, after a certain time being educated in how to swim by teachers, watching becomes more of a hindrance than a help. Once you see the key point of the situation, then you can relate to it properly, actually do it.

You see the teachings are not really like do-it-yourself books. They do not go through every point down to the last detail. They just indicate, give hints. The teachings are an awakening process to rouse you to the situation, rather than a compendium of step-by-step, specific guidance. The teaching gives hints, and you are inspired to go out and develop them. Then you find that you can do it. That is the whole process. Spontaneity and basic intelligence become extremely important. They begin to function independently when the confusions begin to arise. That is what is meant by the notion of the universal guru.

Intellect

LOOKING AT THE GENERAL PICTURE of psychology as we get involved with more and more complex patterns of the skandhas, it becomes clear that it is a pattern of duality developing stronger and stronger. The general tendency of ego is uncertain at the beginning how to establish its link with the world, its identity, its individuality. As it gradually develops more certainty, it finds new ways of evolving; it becomes more and more brave and daring in stepping out and exploring new areas of possible territory or new ways of interpreting and appropriating the world available around it. So it is a pattern of a kind of stubborn bravery making itself more complicated patterns. The fourth skandha, samskara, is a continuation of this pattern. It could be called "intellect." Samskara is intellect in the sense of being intelligence which enables the ego to gather further territory, further substance, more things.

Samskara does not seem to have any good exact literal translation or equivalent term. The basic literal meaning has the sense of a gathering or accumulation, meaning specifically a tendency to accumulate a collection of mental states as territory. These mental states are also physical; they are mind/body states. So samskara has quite a lot of varieties of different types of classifications of mental patterns. But this is not just a series of names in a list; the patterns are related to each other in an evolutionary pattern they form together as well. The various aspects of samskara are mind/body patterns that have different emotional qualities to them. There are fifty-one general types of these. I do not think we have to go to great lengths here to cover all the types in detail, but let me try to give you some rough idea of them.

There are certain samskaric patterns or attitudes associated with vir-

tue or religion or goodness, which we could say are the expression of basic intelligence, buddha nature; but they also are appropriated by ego and so help constitute its natural tendency of spiritual materialism. There are eleven of these types of good attitudes or tendencies among which are surrendering or faith, awareness, discipline, equanimity, absence of passion, absence of anger, absence of ignorance, humbleness or shyness, a tendency of nonviolence, a tendency of energy or effort or bravery. An important point here is that nobody had to invent these religious or spiritual ideas, but they are a natural part of human psychology. There is a natural sort of gentleness, absence of aggression and passion, a hardworkingness and a nonviolence; and these tendencies develop as part of samskara.

Altogether the general nature of this particular group of samskaric tendencies is absence of aggression. They are a sort of dharma mind. By dharma we generally mean passionlessness in the sense of nongrasping or nonclinging. That which has a context of passion is nondharma. So these tendencies are characterized by an absence of speed or aggression. These thoughts are generally considerate thoughts. They contain a certain amount of conscience. They do not just exist arbitrarily, but they have some reason to be. For one thing there is the absence of aggression, openness, and for another thing this kind of mind/body pattern carries a high degree of awareness of the situations outside oneself. In other words, there is an absence of ego in the superficial sense; in the ordinary sense they are not egocentric. But this is not a question of the fundamental ego; such thoughts are not necessarily egoless. This depends on the user of the thoughts. However, the general quality of them reminds one of a good person, considerate and not egocentric in the ordinary, popular sense.

Then there are the six opposite types of thoughts, the egocentric thoughts. They are ignorance, passion, anger, pride, doubt, and dogmatism. These are considered to be the absence of the virtues of the kinds of thoughts we have just discussed.

Here again, the ignorance in question is quite different from the basic ignorance that constitutes the ego, that sort of fundamental ignoring of oneself. The ignorance we are referring to here is the source of all the other kinds of evil thoughts, those which are not considerate, those which are the absence of the spiritual type of thoughts. They are characterized by a sort of sudden boldness which acts without considering the

situation. They just act out on impulse, without any sharpness and precision. They are wholly intoxicated by a sense of whatever one wants to accomplish, so they act brashly without seeing one's relationship to the situation.

And passion here is also actual passion rather than the fundamental passion of grasping. It is the actualized passion of desire. Whereas the fundamental passion is sort of an innate quality of grasping within ego, this is the actual active movement of grasping. On this level, passion, hatred, and pride are all directly active qualities rather than fundamental ones. Pride here is the sense of preservation of oneself in relationship with others. Doubt is the sense of not having enough security in oneself. Dogmatic belief is clinging to a particular discovery that we have made and not wanting to let go of that idea because we feel if we did there would be nothing left to cling to.

Dogmatic belief itself is divided into different types, for instance, the philosophical beliefs in eternalism and nihilism. Eternalism is the idea that everything in the worldly or spiritual spheres is continuous and permanent. Part of this is the notion that there is a permanent significance to our experience, that there could be an ultimate and permanent salvation within the realm of the experiencer. Nihilism is the opposite extreme. It is the fatalistic belief that everything has no value and is meaningless. Another of the dogmatic tendencies is the false belief in morality or a particular discipline that one follows, dogmatically clinging to it and trying to hold on to it as a philosophical view.

Then there are four types of neutral thoughts; sleep or slothfulness, intellectual speculation, remorse, and knowing. These are neutral in that they can fit in with different patterns, the virtuous or the evil ones. Theoretical intellectual speculation is obviously neutral in that it functions in the service of either kind of tendency. Remorse is, in a sense, a questioning process that further clarifies a situation: you have done something wrong and feel doubtful about it, which leads you on a kind of a process of rediscovery. That is neutral in that that process of discovery could function in relation to either the considerate or egocentric patterns. Knowing is a neutral state because when you learn something you have a sudden open attitude to it at that moment, before you get into the next double take, that is, before ego appropriates it as territory. There is that momentary open feeling of acceptance of whatever you heard, whatever you understood. Sleep or slothfulness is of course also neutral,

since it also contains that kind of possibility of belonging to an open or egocentric context.

Now all these kinds of thoughts are further classified according to the instinctive behavior connected with them, how you project them to the world outside. That is done on the basis either of hatred or desire. Hatred in this case is a natural kind of aggression, and desire is a natural kind of longing. All these thoughts are motivated either by instinctive hatred or desire. Even apparently good thoughts—compassion, for instance—on the level of ego, would have an underlying sense of hatred or of passion. It depends on whether the thought process is originally based on speed or on a kind of starvation, which is the need to grasp something, to absorb oneself in something. In addition, some thought patterns have ignorance as underlying motivation.

The study of the samskara skandha can teach us that all the phenomena of human psychology, whatever types of thought patterns occur, all have these good and bad and indifferent qualities. Therefore we cannot really define one thought pattern as being the only right kind—there is no such thing as absolute aggression or absolute passion or absolute ignorance. All of them have the slight tendency of the other types. The whole idea is that therefore one cannot just condemn one type and totally accept another, even if it is the spiritual virtuous type of thoughts. They are questionable as all the other kinds of thoughts are questionable. That is a very important point—nothing is really to be condemned or accepted.

On a larger scale, the whole pattern of the five skandhas is also neutral, rather than belonging particularly to samsara or particularly to nirvana. But one thing is quite certain and constant about the five skandhas—they manufacture karmic chain reactions all the time. That is always, unquestionably the case. The karmic pattern cannot exist by itself, of course, since karma is not some other kind of entity that exists independently. Karma is a creative process which brings results, which in turn sow seeds of further results. It is like an echo process. You shout and your voice bounces back on you as well as being transmitted to the next wall, and it goes on and on. And the skandhas could be said to be the horse of karma. The speed of karma is based on the five skandhas. The natural, sort of chemical cause-and-effect pattern remains within karma, but the speed that the cause-and-effect process requires in order to function is the skandhas.

Perhaps we should have some discussion.

Question: Did you say that samskara is associated with neither nirvana nor samsara, or does that apply to all the skandhas?

Rinpoche: To all the skandhas.

Question: I am puzzled. You said that the good thoughts were somehow related to buddha nature.

Rinpoche: Well, that is easily possible if there is underlying non-ego intonation. That is why they are called "good," because they are not acts of egomania in the literal, ordinary sense.

Question: Is there more possibility of buddha nature in the states of mind classified as good?

Rinpoche: Yes, there is a tendency to be closer to the awakened state; but at the same time, if this good is being used by the ego, then it is not necessarily absolute good, but just sort of pseudo.

Question: Then does it make any difference? That is, is it worthwhile trying to be a good boy?

Rinpoche: I don't think so, necessarily. Although these are said to be the good or virtuous ones, at the same time such thoughts—patience or nonviolence or whatever—cannot happen by themselves. They have to have the tinges of passion or aggression, as I said, or also ignorance. They cannot constitute the basic energy that has to go along with them for them to occur. So there is no such thing as 100 percent good in any case. The tendencies are sort of lighter and heavier rather than good and bad.

Question: So they all come from ignorance, hatred, and passion.

Rinpoche: They do, yes.

Question: Is the thread that connects them perception, feeling, or both?

Rinpoche: Quite likely it is form, the basic continuity, ignorance which makes it all possible for the others to continue.

Question: I am confused about speed. There is a speed of the ego being driven, going faster and faster, and there is also a speed of universal energy, or something like that. There is an evil speed, but is there also another speed?

Rinpoche: Well, I'm trying to use the word *speed* as a sort of driving aggression. But that is not purely pejorative. This has a positive aspect as well, because any kind of aggression, any kind of movement that there is, always has neutral energy that goes along with it. So speed is pure force, neutral force, which could be used for different purposes. The

buddha wisdom of the accomplishment of all actions could also be called speed. But somehow that speed is not based on a target. Once you have a target, or criteria in terms of reaching somewhere from somewhere else, that makes the whole pattern of speed destructive. In the case of the energy without a target, without a relativity notion, that speed just happens and returns just by its own nature. It fulfills actions completely and comes back. Because fulfilling action in this case follows no criterion or model at all. The speed or energy just goes out and gets into the natural situation spontaneously, tries to bring the natural situation to its fullest state, and then comes back. This kind of speed does not behave in a dictatorial way. In the case of ego speed, you have a blueprint of what should be happening and you put out speed accordingly. You try to control situations or remold them. That leads to disappointment and confusion.

Question: Wouldn't these dogmatic beliefs that you talked about be beliefs on the part of the "watcher"?

Rinpoche: If there is any tendency to get yourself to believe in certain ideas, particularly philosophical views such as the nihilistic and eternalistic ones, automatically you are aware of the learning process as being separate. You watch yourself in the process of learning and you use particular tools of different intensity, either gentle or aggressive ones, to bring about a certain result. So all these beliefs are, in a sense, very deliberate. It is a natural mind process, but that mind process involves deliberate effort—deliberately trying to be good or deliberately trying to grasp something and so on. Except for those four types of neutral patterns, sleep and the others: they are not deliberate, which is why they are called neutral. They can be influenced by either kind of deliberate thought pattern. They do not contain a watcher, actually. That is why they can be used by either kind of deliberate pattern or by ego or non-ego. But the rest of them are fixed and definite.

Question: That watcher is the one that puts everything that happens into one of those categories, these samskaric types of good and bad?

Rinpoche: Yes. That is actually a certain kind of common sense developed by the establishment of ego. By this time ego is so well established, it has developed its own regulations and rules. This becomes a kind of common sense. You see, as long as you are involved with the ego game, all these flashes of different types of thoughts and concepts are not independent ones at all. They are purely dependent on central headquarters.

You always have to report back to yourself in order to define the ground. That is the watcher. And the watcher has a watcher as well.

Question: Would you say a little more about doubt? You have just spoken of doubt as one of the negative factors. Previously you spoke about it in a positive sense.

Rinpoche: We have been speaking about two quite different kinds of doubt. One kind is one of the six types of egocentric thoughts. This is ego's tendency to have doubt in terms of the motivation of passion and anger and ignorance. It is a fear of losing ground, bewilderment rather than doubt in the intelligent sense. We fear we may not be able to survive to implement our ambition properly in the perspective of our egohood. It is more a fear of losing ground than doubt.

The intelligent doubt we were talking of earlier on is a general sense that there is something wrong all the way through, a sort of seed of doubt which runs right through the whole five-skandha process. It is the quality of inquisitiveness, questioning mind, which is the seed of the awakened state of mind. This is doubt or intelligence which is not protecting anything. It is purely questioning rather than trying to serve either the ego or non-ego state. It is purely a process of critical view which goes on all the time.

Question: I'm trying to relate this to inner experience. Associations present themselves and many other things, you know, when one is sitting quietly. And then a thought happens and there is belief in it, and then remembrances, and then an impulse arises that this that I am believing is not necessarily so. It may or may not be. I think what I'm trying to ask is—is this still within the pattern of attachment, or is this in the direction of something a little bit more free?

Rinpoche: You see, it is very difficult to make a generalization. What you described in itself could have different implications. The implication could be based solely on a survival notion; it could be based on a sense of "maybe that one, maybe this one"—ego jockeying for better position. Or there is the possibility of something else—that it could be based on a kind of open mind. It depends on your own relation to that.

Question: You mentioned slothfulness as one of the neutral states. But I'm wondering in what way slothfulness can be converted. Can it be channeled in the same way that intellectual speculation could be clarified?

Rinpoche: Slothfulness could be sort of infiltrated rather than changed or channeled into something else. This is because slothfulness does not

contain any definite thing. It is a process, a mind process of not having made up your mind quite. You are just trundling along. So it has the possibility of being infiltrated from any side.

Question: Is slothfulness synonymous with laziness?

Rinpoche: Well, the words are complicated in this case. Somehow, laziness could have the connotation of being a naughty boy. You know, you should be doing thus and such, but you do not want to do it. Sort of stubbornness. But sloth is a general heaviness or being sleepy rather than game playing. It is just quite honest and ordinary.

Question: So in that sense slothfulness may be more receptive, more passive?

Rinpoche: Precisely, yes. It could be infiltrated.

Question: Insofar as you try to be something, wouldn't it be better to try to be honest instead of trying to be good? I mean honest in the sense of trying to abandon one's own pretensions. Isn't that the basic effort?

Rinpoche: I think so, yes. The reason why all these different types of thoughts and ideas are being introduced, in fact, is so you can see your psychological picture in its fullest perspective; so that you do not try to regard one kind of thought pattern as good or another as bad; so that instead you regard everything directly and simply.

Question: I have an image going in my mind that the skandhas represent energy which has gone astray from the awakened state of mind and has taken on various forms. Lost from its origin, it has taken on various forms. And it seems that spiritual understanding would return this lost energy to its origin in some way. But also I have another image from when you pointed out that ignorance or form has the thread that holds all the skandhas together. Then I had the thought that it is simply a question of not operating ignorance—if you're just completely still and unconcerned, it will all just blow away. And the two images give me two different attitudes. Do you know what I mean?

Rinpoche: Well, I don't see any difficulties there. Ignorance is the binding factor for all the skandhas in their minute detail, but ignorance cannot exist by itself without relative situations, and the relative situation of ignorance is the awakened state of mind, intelligence, which makes ignorance survive or die. In other words, we could say that the awakened state of mind is the thread also, in the same way as ignorance. It runs right through the skandhas.

Question: But it wouldn't be awakened if it were doing that.

Rinpoche: It would. Ignorance feels the other, the awakened, aspect of the polarity; therefore it does what it does. There is some subtle relationship ignorance is making with the basic intelligence of buddha nature. So ignorance in this case is not stupid, it is intelligent. The term for ignorance in Tibetan, *marikpa,* means "not seeing, not perceiving." That means deciding to not perceive, deciding to not see, deciding to not look. Ignorance makes certain decisions and, having already made a certain decision, it tries to maintain it no matter what. Often it faces a hard time keeping to that decision constantly, because one act of ignorance cannot persist indefinitely, once and for all. Ignorance also is based on sparks or flashes of ignorance operating on some ground, and the space between two sparks of ignoring is the intelligence that this process of ignorance is operating on. It also happens occasionally that ignorance forgets to maintain its own quality, so that the awakened state comes through. So a meditative state of mind occurs spontaneously when, occasionally, the efficiency of ego's administration breaks down.

Question: Would you explain what you mean by "ego game"?

Rinpoche: I think that is what we have been discussing all along in this seminar. The basic notion of ego is the notion of survival, trying to maintain oneself as "I am," as an individual. Now, as we just said, there is a tendency for the coherency of that occasionally to break down. Therefore one needs to find all sorts of means of confirmation, of confirming a coherent, consistent me, a solid me. Sometimes, quite knowingly, ego has to play a game as though nothing had gone wrong with it. It pretends seeing through ego never happened, even though secretly it knows better. So ego trying to maintain itself leaves one in the strange position of trying to indoctrinate oneself oneself. This is a false pursuit, of course. But even knowing it is false does not particularly help, because ego says, "That's not the point. We have to go on trying to learn to survive, playing this survival game of grasping, using any situation available in the present moment as part of the survival technique." This involves a power game as well, because at a certain stage the defense mechanisms you have set up become more powerful than you are. They become overwhelming. Then, when you become used to the overwhelming quality of the defense mechanisms, when, for a moment, they are absent, you feel very insecure. That game of polarities goes on and on. On the whole, ego's game is played in terms of ignoring what is really happening in a situation. You constantly, quite stubbornly want to

see it from your point of view rather than seeing what really is happening there.

Question: You spoke of an aerial view of the five skandhas. Do you mean that with the development of meditative awareness one can actually experience the development of the skandhas in oneself?

Rinpoche: Yes. In a sudden glimpse of awareness, or in the meditation state, one sees the ups and downs of the five skandhas taking place and dissolving and beginning to develop again. The whole idea of meditation is to develop what is called the "wisdom eye," prajnaparamita, transcendental knowledge. It is knowledge, information, at the beginning, when you are watching yourself and beginning to discover yourself, your psychological pattern. And suddenly, strangely, that watching process begins to become an experiencing process, and it is, in a sense, already under control. That does not mean to say that the development of the five skandhas would stop taking place. The skandhas happen continuously until they are transmuted into what are called the "five tathagathas," the five types of awakened being.

You see, at the beginning, we have to develop a very sharp, precise mind to see what we are. There is no other way of sharpening our intelligence. Pure intellectual speculation would not sharpen it at all, because there you have to introduce so much stuff that blunts, that overclouds. The only way to do it is just to leave intelligence as it is with the help of some technique. Then the intelligence begins to learn how to relax and wait and allow what takes place to reflect in it. The learning process becomes a reflection rather than creating things. So waiting and letting what arises reflect on the intelligence is the meditation practice. It is like letting a pond settle down so the true reflection can be seen. There are already so many mental activities going on constantly. Adding further mental activities does not sharpen the intelligence. The only way is just to let it develop, grow.

Question: One of the six virtues of a bodhisattva is energy, exertion, virya. It is hard to relate this virtue to the idea of a waiting intelligence.

Rinpoche: Well, I don't see any problem, particularly. You see, hardworkingness or exertion does not necessarily mean doing a lot of things. Waiting in itself could be very hard work, being is very hard work, and there are so many temptations not to do it.

Question: Is there some kind of recognizable psychological event

which particularly reinstigates the process of the five skandhas and of karma?

Rinpoche: Yes, that is what is called "immediate cause." It is the immediate occasion of getting into a further series of events, a sort of stepping-stone. Each transition has to have that intermediary moment. Even in sleep, things function that way. It allows you to fall asleep from being awake and in dreams pushes you from one moment to the next and then makes it possible to wake up again. Karma is dependent on that state, that immediate cause. It cannot function without it. The whole idea of the practice of meditation is that in the meditative state you do not have that impulse. That suddenness or the restlessness is automatically freed; that sudden impulse has been transmuted into a flowing process through the use of a meditation technique. That is how the process of meditation can be a way of preventing planting the seed of karma.

Question: It seems from what you've been saying that meditation in action has something to do with going very much into detail. You know something and then something else comes along. And if you could just go along with the new detail—

Rinpoche: Well, you see, awareness meditation, meditation in action, is a process of providing fundamental space. If you are talking or you are doing things, you are acting within that open space, so that no sudden jolt can happen, no sudden confusion or slothfulness. That abrupt clicking-in of confusion can only take place if the ground, the basic space, has been solidified or frozen. The karmic process operates against that kind of solidified background. Whereas once that solidity has been transformed by acknowledging there is another aspect to it, which is open space, openness, then any kind of sudden, impulsive movement is accommodated. Still the same rhythm goes on, but that rhythm now becomes a creative movement. The rhythm of events goes on, but you appreciate that that rhythm can happen on space, on open ground, and this brings back the message of meditation happening.

So you do not have to force yourself to remember; you do not have to try to maintain your awareness all the time. Once you are open to the challenges of the moment, somehow, as you go along, the situation flashes back the awareness to you. So a perpetually creative process develops and a highly precise one as well.

Question: If the situation doesn't flash back that awareness, then you forget it?

Rinpoche: Well, you disown whatever comes up. If you try to keep up and maintain something, then it does not work. It becomes your product. You are solidifying space again.

Question: Getting back to that transitional moment in karma where it picks up impetus. Do I understand that as you advance in your meditation you notice this happening, and by noticing it you can prevent it from happening and control the situation? Once you notice what leads to the karma, do the steps become much easier to deal with?

Rinpoche: Well, that is rather tricky. Theoretically you might know the whole thing, but once you have the idea in mind that what you are doing is trying to escape from karma, to step out of it, then you are already double-crossed. The probability then is that you are automatically not in the right state of mind. That is why is it important in meditation practice that at the time of practice everything is just based on a simple technique, but with no aim or object at all, none whatsoever. You give up everything and go along with the practice entirely and fully.

Question: Yes, but in daily situations I think it's helpful to deliberately notice things happening.

Rinpoche: You see, in daily situations if you have a certain understanding of the continuous quality of the meditation experience happening all the time, then, without trying to meditate deliberately, you automatically know the daily situation, because the daily situation comes to you as a reminder, rather than your trying to go to it. It becomes a personal creative process.

Question: You have talked about creation at times as though it were an ego process and now as though it is more egoless. Could you clarify?

Rinpoche: I suppose you could say there is ego creation and true creation. I think here again it is a question of whether or not the notion of competitive achievement, of an ideal or a goal, is present. With ego's notion of creation you have a concept that you want to achieve something, and you try to match your situation with your idea of the actual achievement. You compare the dream and the actual reality. That is not the ultimate creative process but a one-way creation which can wear out. You build a thing and it is finished; you have no further place to go. It is a very limited inspiration.

Whereas in the other approach without aim and object, without a goal in mind, each situation acts as an end in itself. You go along with that situation and that situation brings another, it opens another possibil-

ity. So you go along and along. That is like the experience of the bodhisattva developing through the bhumis, or stages of development. When one bhumi is accomplished, he goes on to the next. Without ambition, he goes on and on. He had no desire for enlightenment, but one situation leads to another until he finds himself enlightened one day. This is because he relates to things on their own merits rather than in terms of a goal of his own.

So the ambition type of a creation is that of ego. The alternative is to have natural appreciation of creation itself rather than being fascinated by what *you* are doing. If you tune in to the actual creativity itself, the delight of it, it becomes an inexhaustible source of creativity.

Meditation

PERHAPS AT THIS POINT there is a sense of being bombarded with the classifications of the abhidharma—the process of the development of the skandhas and the various aspects of form, feeling, perception, and samskara. At this point I think it would be good to talk about the practice of meditation very practically and how it fits in with the psychological development we have been talking about. Meditation is a way of scientifically looking at our basic situation and seeing what is important in dealing with it. But maybe we think we do not have to deal with anything at all. Maybe we should just let everything happen and abandon the idea of meditating. That is another possibility, of course, a very tempting one. But the reason for getting into meditation is a very tempting one as well. If we get into meditation, we begin to see our psychological situation very precisely and directly.

I think a fundamental problem that we all have is that we are very critical of ourselves to the point where we are even our own enemies. Meditation is a way of making up that quarrel, of accepting ourselves, making friends with ourselves. We may find we are not as bad as we have been told we are. We will also find that meditation practice is not something exotic and high and out of reach so that we cannot grasp it. Meditation practice is something that takes place on a personal level. It involves an intimate relationship with ourselves. Great intimacy is involved. It has nothing to do with achieving perfection, achieving some absolute state or other. It is purely getting into what we are, really examining our actual psychological process without being ashamed of it. It is getting into what we are properly and thoroughly. It is just friendship with ourselves.

Unless we are able to make friends with ourselves there is no hope at all. If we abandon ourselves as hopeless, as villains, then there is no stepping-stone. If we take that attitude then we must constantly be looking for something much better than ourselves. And that attempt to outrace ourselves on the spot can continue perpetually, on and on and on. And in fact that is just what we do.

So meditation is coming into contact with the actual situation of ourselves, the raw and rugged, painful, irritating, disgusting things going on within our state of being. But even if our state of being is disgusting we should look into it. It is beautiful to see it. To discover that such things exist in the natural situation is very beautiful. It is another dimension of natural beauty. People talk about appreciating natural beauty—climbing mountains, seeing giraffes and tigers in Africa, and all sorts of things; but nobody seems to appreciate this kind of natural beauty of ourselves. This is actually far more beautiful than flora and fauna, far more fantastic, far more painful and colorful and delightful and all the rest.

Meditation is getting into this kind of natural situation, the organic natural situation of what we are, directly, thoroughly, properly. In order to do this, we cannot just rent a helicopter and fly to the heart of the matter without any inconvenience. We do not have the money to buy such a fantastic machine. So what shall we do? The obvious thing to do is walk, just to walk on our own feet, just walk. We have to get into the countryside of this intimate natural beauty and walk. This is exactly what the first step of meditation is, going into our natural psychological situation without trying to find some fancy touristic vehicle. There is no point dreaming about trying to get some exotic Land Rover or fantastic helicopter. It is a very pleasant thing, to begin with, to just walk.

The Buddhist tradition brings us the discoveries of the great teachers who have gone through this process in the past. It recommends to us straightforward meditation techniques, such as anapanasati, identification with breathing, and certain types of mindfulness practices. These practices are valid for our actual psychological situation. They are not millionaires' games. We cannot afford to get into exotic visualizations, magical practices, conjuring tricks of any kind. These are rich men's games—fancy Land Rovers, helicopters, and jets. We have to work with what resources we have, we have to begin small, in an ordinary and simple way. Our actual present situation of what we are is our stepping-stone. And we start from a simple technique such as walking or breath-

ing. This is by no means expensive. It is a natural thing. We can breathe and walk—we have to breathe anyway; we have to walk anyway. That seems to be the starting point of meditation.

The relationship of meditation in this sense to the skandhas is quite interesting. The more we get into the gross, undisguised basic elements of what we really are, the more we relate to the skandhas. We cannot relate with the skandhas with masks on or dressed up in commentaries. We can only relate with the skandhas as they are in their naked and rugged state. We are meditating in a way that emphasizes form and the eight types of consciousness because we are trying to bypass the ignoring aspect of ignorance, which is the fundamental pain or the fundamental duality. We are trying to relate with the available bodily situation of breathing or walking. Doing this is very direct and very natural. The pain and pleasure of feeling need not be involved in breathing and walking. Those activities are just a simple source of ultimate natural beauty. And as far as perception is concerned, breathing and walking do not have to involve us in comparative criteria or relative notions of any kind, in logic, or any mind games at all. It is just simply breathing, walking, identifying with the simple process of being. And on the level of samskara, breathing and walking do not require us to associate with any type of thoughts. We do not have to connect ourselves with this type of thought or that type of thought. Thoughts present all sorts of fascinating possibilities: "Why don't we try to get into this virtuous thought of patience? Why don't I get into this virtuous thought of nonviolence? Why don't I just get angry, carried away by passion? Why don't I get smug and stay comfortable in my ignorance?" In the simple meditation practice of just breathing and walking these temptations do not apply because they are not really precise. They do not really have the precision that meditation presents—the sharp and awake and absolute precise quality of dealing with the actual situation as it is. If we are relating with this, we do not need anything further.

So consideration of the five skandhas has brought us to the point where we understand there is nothing else to do but meditate. And this particular picture of human psychology in terms of the five skandhas sees to be the only picture there could be. It convinces us that the only thing to do is just deal with something immediate and fresh. Meditating is just like collecting fresh vegetables from one's home garden instead of going to the supermarket and buying packaged things. We just walk out

into the garden and collect fresh vegetables and cook them. That seems to be an exact analogy for meditation. Any questions?

Question: It seems to me you are saying that meditation for us at this stage of the game should be basic, at the kitchen-sink level, which would mean more bodily. I wonder if more subtle activities like talking or reading can be seen as basic bodily practices too.

Rinpoche: I think so, because you have to use your body. You have to read with your eyes, you have to hold your book in your hands; talking, you have to use your mouth.

Question: But then isn't awareness of the hands holding the book or the mouth making the words being unfair to the author or the person you are talking with? Isn't that overly self-centered?

Rinpoche: Well it depends on whether you are completely one with what you are doing or whether you are playing games. It is quite simple.

Question: You mention meditation as being a way of making friends with oneself; it seems to me more like making enemies with oneself, in that it seems to be a more painful process than the usual process of making friends. I wonder if you could clarify that a little bit.

Rinpoche: That painful experience is very good because that is the beginning of making friends with yourself. If you are really going to make a long-term friendship with somebody, probably the first thing that hits you about that person are the things that you do not like. That is the starting point that provides a foundation for your friendship. It is a really solid foundation, because having included those things, you will not be perturbed later by whatever may happen with that friend. Since you know all the negative aspects and do not have to hide from that side of the relationship, you are now completely open to find the other side, the positive side, as well. That is a very good way to start making friends with oneself or anybody else for that matter. Otherwise you feel cheated when you discover the faults later on.

Question: How do the five skandhas tie in with meditation?

Rinpoche: That's a big question. The five skandhas are a process of five stages of psychological development, and meditation does not contain that development. Meditation is just dealing with the situation that exists before the development took place or just continuing to deal with that basic situation while this development is taking place. In other words, meditation means getting simple rather than getting involved

with the five stages. These five stages become insignificant or just purely external. That means that you are getting to the basic quality of the five skandhas rather than trying to follow their implications as we ordinarily do in a sort of hunting process, as though we are going to reach some valuable conclusion. It is getting to the basic point of the process without getting involved in the sidetracks.

Still, of course, the discovery of five types of processes there already is kind of very amusing. Although you are concerned with the basic point, the presence of the five processes helps keep you smiling.

Question: In the play between ignorance and intelligence that runs through the whole development of the skandhas, there seem to be moments where the skandhas are not occurring. There seems to be a very rapid buildup and then, *poof,* the process goes away. And then it starts again.

Rinpoche: That is the whole point, there is a buildup and then this whole building-up process turns to dust. There is a gap, a space. And then either you build up again or you do not. But that kind of moment does happen. Automatically the process builds up; but before and after that, there is some space. It is like moving fast in one direction and having to turn and come back—you have to stop at the peak point. There is a moment of stillness; in the process of regenerating the speed, you have to stop at one point. That happens.

Question: Does one pass backward through the skandhas? I mean if you were to sit down and meditate, first of all your mind would be full of thoughts. Then you meditate for a while longer and maybe your thoughts are not so discursively connected anymore so that then you relate directly to your perceptions. And then you reach a point where you are not so much relating to your perceptions anymore; they are not that important to you anymore. So then you feel just a vague sense of contact with your stream of associations. And then you have just a vague sense of sitting there. And then maybe you're in a nondualistic state. Could something like that happen?

Rinpoche: It sounds a bit fishy. You see, what you are talking about is going deeper and deeper, slower and slower. Somehow meditation does not happen that way. Once you go into the profundity, deeper and deeper and slower and slower, there is a possibility of being hypnotized by it so that you lose all contact with anything. You lose the dynamic quality of samskara, the dynamic quality of perception, the dynamic

quality of feeling. And these are the only guidelines for buddha activity in a state of enlightenment. You do not want to push those out at all. You do not have to go into a process of going deeper. Rather, at the beginning when you are dealing with form, a certain funny thing goes on between awakeness and confusion. There is a certain funny moment. That is where you strike first, whether you are using the breathing or the walking. Whatever your technique may be, that is your starting point. And meditation happens *right there.* You do not have to go through a process at all. The process just happens by itself. But the important point is the precision and sudden quality of that flash, a kind of first questioning created between sanity and insanity. That first moment of black and white, dullness and sharpness, is the starting point from where you relate with your breathing and your walking. You do not have to slow down at all. Meditation has nothing to do with working with the metabolism of the ego in that sense.

Question: In the *Heart Sutra* it says that Avalokiteshvara saw that the five skandhas were empty. Is that emptiness the same as the space you have just been talking about?

Rinpoche: Yes. The idea is—just flash. That is why it is important for a person to be free from his meditation as a concept, free from the idea "I am going to meditate," the sense of a ritual of any kind. You see if a person is able to relate with his practice of meditation directly and simply on an everyday level, a sane level, then there is a possibility of perceiving the five skandhas as empty. Otherwise once you take the wrong starting point of working on the skandhas one by one systematically, then the five skandhas develop a system as well.

Question: Would the experience of emptiness be no less an aerial view than to see the minute workings of a situation, than seeing what is arising from moment to moment?

Rinpoche: Once you have a good aerial photograph of the whole area, that means that you have all the details in it as well. It is the same thing. Otherwise it cannot be called an aerial view. It is just a blurry picture.

Consciousness

THE FIFTH SKANDHA is consciousness. This involves a certain amount of explanation, since we already used the word *consciousness* at the beginning of the seminar in relation to the skandha of form as containing the eight types of consciousness. The consciousness of the fifth skandha is different from what we talked about before. Consciousness in the sense of the fifth skandha contains the final details of the process of the skandhas, the subtle fulfillment of the process. Consciousness in the first skandha is a sort of basic psychological background where the potentials of consciousness are present as eight types. Here, with the fifth skandha, we are talking about the fruition of those potentials. This is also described as eight types of consciousness, exactly the same categories in the same pattern as in the first skandha.

Another point that needs to be made clear here is the distinction between "mind" and "consciousness." In the Buddhist tradition, mind is purely that which perceives. It does not require brainwork; it is simple perception, just on the level of the nervous system. This simple instinctive function is called mind. The Sanskrit term is *chitta,* which literally means "heart," but it also means "essence," that basic essence of mind which contains the faculty of perception. This kind of perception called mind—reacting to hot and cold, favorable and unfavorable, and so on—is very direct, simple and subtle at the same time. Consciousness, on the other hand, is articulated and intelligent. It is the finally developed state of being that contains all the previous elements. It contains all of the fundamental subtleties of mind, the instinctive aspects on the level of feeling, and it also includes thought patterns. It includes any kind of thinking process. But here the thinking process is on a subconscious

level, whether it be discursive, pictorial, or instinctive. Consciousness is that sort of fundamental creepy quality that runs behind the actual living thoughts, behind the samskaras. The explicit thoughts, the samskaras, are the actual grown-up thoughts, so to speak; whereas the thoughts produced by consciousness are the undergrowth of those thoughts. They act as a kind of padding. The whole pattern of psychology works in such a way that it is impossible for the explicit thoughts—virtuous thoughts or evil thoughts or neutral ones—to be suspended in nowhere, without any context whatsoever. The subconscious thoughts make the context that is necessary for the explicit ones. They constitute the sort of padding or background texture which permits the process to function in such a way that the next appropriate thoughts in the explicit sequence can come through. They are in a sense a kind of kindling.

So, you see, the whole pattern is now very efficiently set up. Now even if the second skandha of feeling does not operate quite completely, or if perception does not function quite properly, consciousness with its subconscious gossip can supply the missing element and keep the whole process in action. It acts as sort of an ignition. It starts up on a particular theme and then sends its message back to the other skandhas so as to activate the skandhic process, to get the whole mechanism going.

So consciousness constitutes an immediately available source of occupation for the momentum of the skandhas to feed on. And, as we discussed before, meditation provides almost the only occasion for that momentum to stop. That is exactly where meditation plays its very important role. Meditation provides some gap in the movement of samskara-type thoughts and even in the fabric of consciousness-type thoughts. It provides a gap which contains no kindling twigs. That gap creates a sort of chaos in the psychological process, chaos in the mechanism of building up karmic situations. That chaos helps to see what is underneath all these thought patterns, both of the explicit and subconscious types. It begins to reveal what is underneath.

What is underneath may not necessarily be particularly appealing. We might theorize that, according to the Buddhist teachings, what ought to be underneath is, of course, enlightened mind. But that is not quite so. At this point what is underneath is the collection of hidden suppressed thoughts. This layer is like the cloudy mind we talked about earlier on, but this time on the fifth skandha level. This is another bank of collected memories that have been placed there. Any kind of thing that you

wanted to ignore, did not want to encourage, or are ashamed of yourself about is put into this bank of confusion—the cloudy mind. The cloudy mind acts as a container for these collections. Ashamed thoughts, irrelevant thoughts, all sorts of unwanted material has been put aside there. And meditation provides the situation which brings these thoughts up because meditation goes right through the thought pattern and touches the ground of cloudy mind. In this way the bank is broken open, the container is broken open.

Because of this, the probability is that the beginning practitioner of meditation will have to go through all sorts of emotional and aggressive thoughts. Particularly those thoughts that one does not want to see or hear anymore come first. In meditation, consciousness acts as a starting point. One cannot meditate without consciousness. At the beginning one has to practice meditation purely on a thought level, a daydream level. It is only a pretense of meditation; one is pretending to meditate. But consciousness is being transformed by this pretense, by the suggestion that you are practicing meditation. In this way, the subconscious network, as well as consciousness itself, is gradually broken through. The speed of consciousness itself is slowed down and then gets through to underneath.

So consciousness in the sense of the fifth skandha can be said to have two aspects—the subconscious aspect and the active aspect of the six senses and cloudy mind in action. This actualized functioning of cloudy mind is on another level altogether from the cloudy mind of the first skandha which was purely embryonic.

Maybe we should have discussion.

Question: Where does memory come in? Is it inherent in all the skandhas?

Rinpoche: Memory is connected with putting things into the cloudy mind. It is an active process in which consciousness picks certain themes and classifies them into particular connections and then sends that over to the cloudy mind, puts it in the bank of cloudy mind along with the collection of wanted and unwanted thoughts that already exists there. What is in the cloudy mind is not only thoughts you dislike and have suppressed, but also content that you would like to play back again in the future for whatever purposes. It could be technical information, experiential material, pain and pleasure, hysterical things. Whatever it is, it is picked up by consciousness and put into that bank of cloudy mind.

Question: Why does it have to be "cloudy" mind? Why can't it just be mind?

Rinpoche: It is just mind, but mind cannot survive without relating to something, without relating that to this. Mind does not mean anything if there is no context of relativity. So that context of relativity which must be maintained in order to survive, that process of maintaining its consistent pattern *is* uncertainty, *is* confusion. The process of maintaining a sense of relativity is what confusion is. Because in order to keep something for future purposes or in order to hide from seeing it, we have to put it into a no-man's-land, an unresolved space. We have to put it away from the current focus of clarity. That *is* the cloudy mind, which does not have particularly sharp delineations of this in relation to that, but is just generally confusion.

Question: What is it that does the sorting, that suppresses things so that they get into the suppressed collection?

Rinpoche: It seems that consciousness picks out something and then hands it over to samskara and then that sends it to perceptions and feelings and then it is processed through and finally sent back to the bank. Consciousness sort of works like chopsticks. It picks an impression up and passes it to where it can begin to be chewed. It is not quite enough just to pick it up, it has to be refined in a sense, it has to pass through the process of all the skandhas.

Question: In meditating you pick up a thought, a disturbing thought, out of this cloudy bank. What happens then to the thought? Does it go back to the bank? Does it burn out? Does it ever disappear? Does it ever resolve itself?

Rinpoche: In many cases thoughts do not become resolved because the impression of a thought that you picked out still remains in the cloudy mind, a sort of reproduction of it remains there. In some cases, for instance during meditation, if we relate to thoughts as insignificant, that is, if we do not put them into categories of any kind, then they are not transferred back through the skandhas anymore. They are not put back through the process, so they are suspended on the level of consciousness and are finally resolved. That is the way of resolving thoughts—through complete nonevaluation. As long as there is nonevaluation, the skandhas have no function. They do not know what to do with a nonevaluated thought because their language is the language of duality and evaluation. That is why they keep thoughts in a *bank*.

Question: So the job at hand would be to wipe out the cloudy mind through a kind of objectivity?

Rinpoche: Well, that is an extremely long process. Eventually the bank will wear itself out; but in the meantime we must keep on collecting as well.

Question: It sounds like duality has its own built-in pattern that ego is only part of. In other words, from what you're saying, it is not that the ego is selecting and fortifying only on its own behalf, but it seems that that kind of selection and fortification is inherent in the nature of duality itself. It is as though the skandhas just automatically select and sort like that without any particular interest.

Rinpoche: Yes, they are sort of slaves rather than intelligent. They have been given their job in accordance with their nature and they just react accordingly.

Question: Is there any way of working with the cloudy mind other than meditation?

Rinpoche: There does not seem to be any other way at all. In order to get free of the pattern of cloudy mind we have to create chaos in the efficient mechanism of consciousness, and nothing can do that except absolute nothing—which is meditation. That seems to be the only way.

Question: Is it good to try to take some kind of positive step in working with your state of mind during meditation?

Rinpoche: You see, meditation should not be regarded as a learning process. It should be regarded as an experiencing process. You should not try to learn from meditation, but try to feel it. Any tendency to categorize what goes on during meditation as learning is an obstacle to meditation. This also applies to exotic techniques. They are also an obstacle because, when you use a technique which has an exotic flavor, you are more conscious of the technique than its application. So any technique used in the practice of meditation should be a purely functional one with no implication of any kind to it at all.

Question: How about reflection upon the nature of one's mind, or rather just sort of recognition of it?

Rinpoche: That is rather like contemplation in the sense of dwelling on something and going over it again and again. That means you have the subject you are working on and yourself separate. It becomes a sort of private show. You end up relating this to that, yourself to the subject matter. But meditation is an act of nonduality. The technique you are

using should not be separate from you; it is you, you are the technique. Meditator and meditation are one. There is no relationship involved.

The trouble with contemplative practice is that there is always a relationship involved, some kind of criterion. Somehow this does not really cut the basic root of neurosis. The root of neurosis is conflict; neurosis requires the conflict of not knowing who you are, of not knowing what you are doing or how you relate with things. Neurosis needs to play this game of conflict. Therefore as long as some kind of resource for playing the game is provided, such as some subject matter, as long as some pretext is provided, you will go on and on with the game. Whether you do it in a genteel spiritual fashion or an ordinary fashion really does not matter. It is still a game.

Question: In the arts, there are techniques that one learns for the purpose of overcoming techniques, in order to be able to get to the direct experience part of it. I was wondering if, besides meditation, there are any other techniques that you could speak of that could help one in this way, some means to open oneself or to get closer to being.

Rinpoche: In addition to the sitting form of meditation, there is the meditation practice in everyday life of panoramic awareness. This particular kind of practice is connected with identifying with the activities one is involved in. This awareness practice could apply to artwork or any other activity. It requires confidence. Any kind of activity that requires discipline also requires confidence. You cannot have discipline without confidence, otherwise it becomes a sort of torturing process. If you have confidence in what you are doing, then you have real communication with the things you are using, with the material you are using. Working that way, a person is not concerned with producing masterpieces. He is just involved with the things that he is doing. Somehow the idea of a masterpiece is irrelevant. The masterpiece, the perfect work of art, comes as a by-product of this process of identifying with what you are doing. You should not be too much concerned with producing a masterpiece.

Question: I'm confused about mindfulness and awareness. Is it that in doing everyday things, simple things, you practice mindfulness? And at the point where you forget what you are doing and go off into daydreaming, is that the point where you should start practicing awareness?

Rinpoche: In mindfulness practice there is very definite precision; every move, every minute detail is noticed. In the case of awareness practice you have the general outline of what you are doing, which cov-

ers the details as well, naturally. In practicing awareness in everyday life, at a certain point the wandering mind itself, the daydreaming mind itself, turns itself into awareness and reminds you. If you are completely one with the idea of awareness as being intimate, it is a true practice. That is, as long as your relationship to the idea of awareness is a very simple one and as long as your awareness practice is connected with sitting practice. In a proper practice of awareness, the complete proper relationship is that awareness comes toward you rather than you going toward it. In other words, if awareness is not possessed or owned, then it happens. Whereas if you try to possess and own awareness, if you relate to it as "my awareness," then it runs away from you. In order to understand this, you need to have the actual experience of it, rather than just reading the menu.

Question: I am very involved with music and for me art can only have a sense if it makes a complete statement of a certain very clear quality. In this connection I have been very much struck by the quality that emanates from certain ceramic lohans that can be seen in Western museums. I would like to find a way to begin to approach a statement of that sort in my own life. Everything else seems so trivial.

Rinpoche: Generally, the whole idea of appreciation is based, of course, on true understanding of things as they are. This means that you have to develop true understanding, which means understanding without other ideas put on it. If it is overlaid with other ideas, it becomes commentary or interpretation, rather than true understanding. True understanding is direct and simple appreciation, simple understanding without any criteria attached to it. I think this idea is expressed very clearly in a lot of Japanese art—flower arrangement, for example. Just a simple twig is chosen and just a couple of flowers are arranged in a certain way and the two elements are put together. Maybe there is a small rock beside them and a very simple plain background without any fancy designs behind, against which you can see the actual arrangement of flowers properly. The lohan that you mentioned also has that same simple quality. He just does not have any pretense of any kind. He just sits there. It reminds one of the Zen saying, "When I eat, I eat; when I sleep, I sleep." It is the same sort of thing. When you sit, you sit properly. Just sit ordinarily. In fact the special quality of the lohan comes from the fact that he is so insignificant, absolutely insignificant; so ordinary that he is

superordinary. It is because of that total ordinariness that he becomes special and radiates.

Question: Rinpoche, how does insanity fit in with the five skandhas? How would you explain insanity in terms of that system?

Rinpoche: Well, there seem to be two types of insanity—I do not know if *insanity* is the right word or not—two types of unbalanced states of mind. One of them is what we call "flipped," really mad. Because the world has come to appear totally and powerfully uncompassionate to the mad person, he sees every new event in terms of this total distortion and he loses his natural logic. This is connected with the distortion of consciousness, the fifth skandha. It is complete distortion on this level; on this level all criteria are lost. He is completely mad. His language is incoherent and he does all sorts of things that do not have any coherent significance. The other type is not mad at all in this sense. This type of person functions naturally, normally, looks after himself or herself, but distance is always being distorted. This sense of distance is the basic requirement for skillful communication. To communicate skillfully a person must be aware of interpersonal distance—a sense of whether he should reach out or whether he should wait. That kind of distance becomes very distorted so that communication is handled unskillfully; and there is frustration about that blindness. This brings on aggression and the demand for pain. This type is the egocentric, the egomaniac. Its main characteristic is the basic confusion of losing the sense of distance and this is connected with cloudy mind on the primeval level, as the background of all the skandhas. The confusion here is at the level where the original criteria separating this from that developed, at the level of the first development of duality. That is where distance first develops, the distance between me and that, that and me. Because one becomes completely overwhelmed, involved, self-centered into so much *here,* one loses the distance. That is the extreme of egocentricity.

Question: Is that accessible to cure?

Rinpoche: I think both types can definitely be cured. But you see it is really tricky to cure problems like that. It depends very much on what sort of method you use. There are a number of methods which are seemingly good, but it turns out that the method itself can be turned into fuel. The process of cure itself becomes fuel for the disorder to live on. Somehow, the analysis method and the encounter-group-type method do not seem to be particularly the way. If you put a person in

an encounter group, at the beginning the person might see things and do things completely honestly, in an open way; but then at a certain point the person begins to pick up the style of the other people taking part in the group and it becomes another kind of language. Quite probably, the person picks up a whole new style just for his participation in encounter groups. Very frighteningly, it becomes the ultimate kind of deception: the person is expressing everything, saying everything out, but at the same time there is a basic deception which is never expressed at all.

There is a certain danger in any purely analytic method. Somehow the word does not help very much at all. The word is actually the source of the confusion anyway. People who are "flipped" have a very skillful way of using words in accordance with their mad perspective; so the survival of their madness could be endless.

It seems that setting up a certain kind of general situation for the person is more effective. One starts with the basic physical situation of food and living environment. The whole idea of using the situation is to communicate with the unbalanced person so as to awaken him, so you start on the basic level of survival, the instinctive level, the level of the animal realm. The person should have some feeling of instinctive simple communication. Start that way. Then having established that kind of simple communication on the level of survival, the rest becomes much easier and quite obvious.

Question: When these five skandhas are going along mechanically, just doing what they do, what happens when the individual who is part of these five skandhas becomes compassionate? What happens to the skandhas? Can you describe the process of compassion in terms of the skandhas?

Rinpoche: The basic idea of compassion is communication, skillful communication. That kind of skillful communication develops through relationships. This begins on the consciousness level. But in fact compassion is the source of transmutation of all the skandhas into the five tathagathas, or five aspects of enlightenment, that we discussed earlier. Compassion makes the skandhas function independently rather than as part of a chain. Ordinarily, feeling is dependent on form, form is dependent on feeling, feeling is dependent on perception and samskara, and so on. They are all interdependent. They cannot be separate things. Whereas when the skandhas are transmuted into tathagatha principles,

they become independent. In other words, all the skandhas have their independent mind and intelligence. This process of the skandhas becoming independent of each other begins from compassion. Communication based on this state of mind is the ultimate communication.

Question: I keep seeing the skandhas as part of the psychology of an individual. I see the process of compassion as someone behaving mechanically and then suddenly becoming sensitive. I'm still forced to see it somehow as a dualistic relationship, even when the five skandhas become five tathagathas. I mean the relationship of, say, a compassionate individual to those with whom he is relating.

Rinpoche: It has to remain a dualistic relationship still. Nothing is wrong with that at all. But in the case of compassion the process does not become centralized. You see, duality in the ultimate sense consists of wisdom and compassion; the two poles are necessary. If your five skandhas develop into the five tathagatha principles, you still have duality, but you are not baffled by it at all. It is a natural function. When we talk about nonduality, we mean it in contrast to the bewilderment by duality that is the ordinary case.

Question: So the process of meditation is trying to cut the link between the skandhas? And a man who has done enough meditation, let us say, would have all the skandhas but they just would not be connected?

Rinpoche: Would not be connected, that is right. That is what is meant by cutting the karmic chain. The chain of karma is the five skandhas. And even after the links have been cut, the skandhas continue running, the process keeps running through. Actually the skandhas are not really linked; it is more that they are pushed one against the other. By meditating, you are slowing down the process. When it has slowed down, the skandhas are no longer pushed against one another. There is space there, already there.

Question: When the five skandhas are functioning independently, what happens to memory?

Rinpoche: Memory becomes a sort of inspiration to each of them in their skillful activity. There is skillful activity because you do not have to refer back to memory anymore. You see, memory is a very cowardly way of dealing with a situation. Since you are not in direct contact with the present situation, you have to refer back to what used to be. And you work that way. Whereas if you are relating directly to the present situation, as is the case with inspiration, then you do not require mem-

ory to work your way through the situation. You can tell everything from the present situation. Still you have the information of the past because of the present situation, in terms of the present situation rather than purely in the form of what was.

Question: In working on separating the skandhas, are they pushed apart one at a time, slowly, or does it happen suddenly all at once?

Rinpoche: It is an extremely gradual process, like a wound healing. On the whole, there does not seem to be such a thing as sudden enlightenment as it is ordinarily understood. Of course there is sudden discovery of the different stages. This is like your discovering that your hair has gone gray or that you have become fat.

Question: You have said that we begin to meditate with ambition. The consciousness is still in control of everything. And at some point, you said the bank of subconscious thoughts comes up and consciousness is no longer in control. This seems to me to be on the way toward enlightenment. What I wonder is, until we are enlightened, do we always meditate with ambition?

Rinpoche: You begin with ambition of some kind. Then at a certain stage meditation becomes instinctive. Then you cannot not meditate—it happens to you.

Question: But when the process of the skandhas starts reversing itself and consciousness is losing control, you have lost your original incentive. What you are doing no longer makes sense from the point of view you started from.

Rinpoche: Exactly, yes. That is the point at which the techniques begin to drop away, as well as the games that are involved in pretending to yourself that you are meditating.

Question: Well, during the gradual process that still goes on, what is it that becomes attractive about meditation, that replaces the ambition? People still want to sit down and meditate even if they are almost enlightened.

Rinpoche: You start with ambition and then meditation begins to seep into your system, so to speak. Gradually your system begins to require meditation. It is sort of an addiction, sort of an infiltration of your system begins to happen. That is what happens with bodhisattvas. They take a vow not to attain enlightenment, but they find one day that they have attained enlightenment anyhow because the practice has thoroughly

infiltrated their system. Their behavior has become the complete embodiment of the dharma.

Question: In getting beyond duality, beyond criteria, there is still relativity and still form. There is still some kind of distinction between this and that. Wouldn't there then still be preference, say, for bliss, understanding, clarity? Or does it get to the point where it no longer makes any difference whether the forms are heavenly or demonic?

Rinpoche: There is a stage at which all of these sort of heavy-handed dualities dissolve. There is a very, very heavy-handed and solid duality in which without that, this cannot survive; because of this, that happens to be. You reach the stage of losing this sort of concept. And then you are conscious that you have lost that, got beyond it: you feel freer, but at the same time you feel that you have gained something. But this is not quite final. You still have the memory that you have relinquished that heavy duality, that you used to have such ideas but you have lost them now. But a person gets beyond even that. One reaches a point where even the sense of the absence of duality no longer applies. The whole thing becomes very natural and obvious. On that level, a person really begins to perceive things as they are. A sort of transparent experience of duality begins to develop in which things are really precise without depending on each other. There is no sense of comparison, just precision. Black is black and white is white.

Question: I'm a little confused about the distinction between panoramic awareness, which does not have the definite quality of mindfulness, and a kind of blurry state which comes up. I'm talking about the kind of blurry state in which one leaves tools all around, leaves one thing half finished to start another, etc. That seems to be the kind of dreamy state that frequently comes up just after one has finished meditation. It just does not seem to matter where you put your tools. Is panoramic awareness that kind of a blurry thing?

Rinpoche: The panoramic awareness of meditation in action contains textures. Texture are part of its scope. You see things in the right shape, in their own right shape, their own right situation—which is a kind of precision, sharpness. That sharpness and precision comes from experiencing the distance, proper distance, that we were talking about earlier on. You feel immediately the right skillful and active relationship with things or people. You experience them as they are, completely—so the tools belong to the toolshed. They are not knives and forks or anything

else. You would not use the toilet to bathe and the basin to defecate. A sense of the proper relationship of things is included in your panoramic vision. You just would not do things the wrong way around. In the case of the blurry state, this is cloudy mind on the instinctive level. One is so much wrapped up in oneself that there is no chance for panoramic vision at all. There is nothing to be panoramic about. One is totally wrapped up in one's own little world. Others see you moving very slowly, very gently, saying very little, doing very mysterious things—but still that could hardly be described as a contemplative state of mind. It is more what has been described in the scriptures as a drunken elephant.

Auspicious Coincidence

WE HAVE RUN OUT of scheduled subjects to talk about, and that in itself might be an interesting point to work on. The idea that applies here is what is known in Tibetan as tendrel [brten 'brel]. *Tendrel* literally means "coincidence" or "chance." This is something that very much underlies the functioning of the psychological movements described in the abhidharma. Tendrel is also the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit *nidana*. The twelve nidanas are the twelve conditions in the chain-reaction process of causation. The nidanas, like the skandhas, begin from ignorance and include feeling, perception, touch or contact, feeling, craving, grasping, intercourse, birth, old age, and death.

The process of coincidence, the coming together of situations that happens through the nidanas, can be described as auspicious. We are familiar with the idea of an "auspicious occasion." Such and such thing happened, such and such people met, and all this combined so that such and such a fortunate event took place. This idea of auspiciousness is usually either regarded as just a form of speech or associated with superstition. It involves a sense of power. The word for "auspicious" as it relates with this notion of coincidence or tendrel is, in Tibetan, *tashi* [bkra.shis]; in Sanskrit, *mangalam*. Auspiciousness is an aspect of coincidence, of this meeting together of conditions. The movement of ignorance and feelings and perceptions and so on is an auspicious one, in a sense, an appropriate one, because all of these twelve causal links are related to each other continuously, infallibly. In other words, there is no mistake about what is happening. Everything is right and appropriate at that very moment. That is what mangalam is, or tashi—a blessing. The Tibetan word *tashi* is composed of *ta*, which means "bright," and *shi*, which means

"fitting" or "good," "appropriate." So it means "precisely fitting to the situation."

An example of this is our being here together. We all took a chance coming here. Nobody knew what this particular seminar was going to turn out to be like, but everybody did take that chance, made that commitment, and here we are. All the necessary conditions came together.

From this point of view, confusion, wandering in the samsaric realm of pain and misery, is not a punishment, not a mistake, but it is fitting, appropriate. It is an absolutely ideal situation. Of course, we could come to this conclusion by a kind of indirect reasoning based on a long-term view, saying that because of the samsaric situation we have an opportunity to study nirvana and liberation: without samsara there would be no nirvana, therefore samsara is an ideal situation. But our thinking need not take this long way around. If we really look directly, fundamentally, we can say that we need not have either samsara or nirvana. That is quite true. We need not have either. The whole situation need not exist. But it happens to be the case, so it is fitting.

This is not particularly an attitude of optimism. It is an attitude of pessimism and optimism together: the situation is fitting in that it is right and it is fitting in that it is wrong, both at the same time. The two poles are constantly present. "Right" is in its own way a healthy situation because it happens to be there. And "wrong" is also, in its own way, a healthy situation because it happens to be there. So the quality of tendrel and tashi, coincidence and auspiciousness, is inseparable from the karmic structure, the impetus that develops through the five skandhas and the twelve nidanas, inseparable from that whole apparatus which brings us into a situation.

So what we are actually studying is the whole process of karmic development without particular reference to which developments are the good ones and which are the bad ones. We are just studying the karmic situation as it is. It is fitting; all aspects of the process coincide in their particular unique ways in each and all situations.

This does not mean that everything is prearranged, that you have no choice at all—because everything happens in the present moment. Buddhist philosophy says that the future is vacant rather than prearranged. You cannot have a prearranged future; "future" means nothing has happened yet. Everything, as far as it exists, is in the present situation. The potential of the future is in the present moment. Therefore

nothing can be prearranged or predestined. On the other hand, the whole thing is to a certain extent predestined because it is the past that presents us with the present situation. Predestination does go as far as that, to the present moment, and does not go beyond. Therefore there is room for the effort involved in the practice of meditation and in the commitment to spirituality to be important. That effort is helpful because it is a way of learning about the present situation and relating with it. If a person is able to meet the present situation, tendrel, the present coincidence, as it is, a person can develop tremendous confidence. He begins to see that no one is organizing the situation for him but that he can work for himself. He develops a tremendous feeling of spaciousness because the future is a completely open one.

This awareness of the auspiciousness of the karmic situation of the present moment is also, to a certain extent, a perception of the future. We may even perceive certain connections. But each case is an individual case. We can talk about having a karmic link with someone, but that link could not exist unless the two people involved were independent as well. Otherwise we could not speak of "link"; it would be one thing. Even if there is a link, it means that there are two independent people who have some connection with each other. So, even in that case, the whole process of this journey of involvement with the situation at that present moment is a lonely journey. Nobody can save you, help you. You yourself have to develop an appreciation and understanding of the process of chain reaction that happens. Looking at it in terms of the twelve nidanas is one way of seeing that.

There is the story of a certain arhat who is born into the particular karmic circumstances of a country without either teacher or teachings. As he grows up he develops questions about life. He takes long walks and at one point comes upon a charnel ground and finds an old piece of human bone. Picking it up and examining it, he questions where this bone comes from. The bone comes, obviously, from death. Where does death come from? Death comes from illness, old age. And he goes on in his reasoning, back and back—old age comes from birth and birth comes from intercourse and intercourse from feeling, touching, grasping, and so on. He goes back, back, back. Finally he finds that the whole source and basic root is ignorance. He arrives at that conclusion just by looking at the bone and reasoning back. It is a kind of auspicious coincidence, a karmically auspicious chain reaction—you find a certain bone and you

happen to sit down and look at it and think about it. This is an intellectual approach, it could be said, and also an intuitive one. It is not particularly extraordinary. Anyone could do it. Anyone could go back, step by step, finding some source for the previous conclusion, some obvious answer.

A lot of us are in a situation similar to that of this arhat—our present situation is that of having a certain dissatisfaction and wanting to find out more about it. A certain curiosity and dissatisfaction, curiosity and pain and pleasure and the knowledge that we have come across in our lives have brought us here together. Having arrived at this point of being here, you question your result. Not only do you look back by way of an intellectual researching process, you also practice and experience what you are thinking about. Having experienced what you are thinking about, all life situations become much clearer, precise and obvious, at this present moment, right here.

So this concept of auspicious coincidence, tendrel, is extremely interesting and important. If a person realizes that a whole chain reaction of incidents brought him into the present situation, that solves a lot of problems. It means that you have already made a commitment to whatever you are doing and the only way to behave is to go ahead, rather than hesitating constantly in order to make further choices. It is like knowing that a certain restaurant serves a particular dish that you have in mind to eat; rather than wasting a lot of time reading the menu after you have sat down in the restaurant, go ahead and order that dish and eat it. In a sense it is a time-saving device to know that the incidents that happen in the round of life are constantly creating a particular unique situation. This is a very powerful insight which brings us a sense of freedom. It is knowing that at one and the same time you are not committed to the present situation and you are committed to it. But what we do with the present situation as it relates to the future is completely up to us. It is an open situation.

This idea of chance or coincidence is fundamental to the abhidharma. What is described there has this character of taking place by coincidence, apparently by chance. This is a very important aspect of it. And it seems that today, by chance, we found our subject to talk about. Perhaps by chance we can have a discussion.

Question: As regards that open future you were talking about, I find that certain thoughts are constantly recurring in individuals. Everybody

has their own style, their own thoughts, but it is as though a script for their whole life has been written. When they try to be completely blank with no conceptualization at all, certain thoughts in their own style keep flashing into their minds. Is this underlying gossip the fifth skandha? Is the continuity of this little gossip narrator going on all the time, the person who is sort of writing the script of our lives? Whatever the case, that omnipresent script seems to keep the future closed rather than permitting it to be open.

Rinpoche: Strangely enough, actually, nobody writes the script at all. It just mysteriously happens. That is sort of a Zen answer rather than one in the style of methodical Indian philosophy. The abhidharma would say it differently. But I think it is a much clearer way of looking at this particular situation to say that nobody writes the script—it just happens. It is because there is nobody writing the script that so many varieties of things keep popping up. It is not that the thoughts happen particularly according to some logical pattern. Logically they might be quite dissociated, but things just pop up. They just happen out of nowhere.

Question: Is the fifth skandha the person who thinks he is writing the script? Making choices, giving coherence to your life?

Rinpoche: Once a thought pops up, he has to acknowledge it. But he does not really dare to, really care to go back to the root of the thought. If he goes back to the root, he does not find any. He does not find anything at all.

Question: I still do not understand why certain kinds of thoughts keep recurring to certain people, no matter what they try to do. Even when they try to change, they look back and their pattern is still there. Where does everybody get their own style of thought pattern?

Rinpoche: Each person has his own style according to his type. There are different types of mentality—the mentality of aggression, the mentality of passion, and all sorts of others. Different types of individuality originate from different types of basic energy. These are basic energies that misunderstood themselves, right at the beginning, and differentiated themselves from the basic ground. That basic ground is an open one, but the energies it contains are colorful. There will be red with a tinge of yellow, yellow with a tinge of green, white with a tinge of pink. The certain basic energies which also carry the tinge of a certain style of emphasis. For instance, there could be hatred, which finds emphasis through passion; the basic quality is hatred but it develops in terms of

passion. There could also be other combinations, such as a basic quality of pride with emphasis through ignorance. All sorts of combinations of sparks of light develop. Then they become individuals, detached from the main ground, like satellites. In this way, we each develop our particular version of ignorance, because of those particular colors, so to speak, that we had right from the beginning. Our particular individual style with its particular energies runs through all the processes of psychological evolution—the five skandhas, the twelve nidanas, and so on. But this is not a hang-up at all. It is our wealth. We each are a particular type of person with a particular type of mania; and that is good.

Question: Could you speak a little more about the commitment to the present situation you were talking about, and particularly how to distinguish that from the ego's commitment to extend itself?

Rinpoche: Somehow the ego's commitment to extend itself has no direction. The ego's movement is not a flowing one. It is simply trying to maintain its own house. Since ego's commitment involves purely this maintenance sort of mentality, there is really no sense of journey involved at all. In the case of the commitment to the present situation, there is a movement or journey. The sense of journey consists in the fact that, from the point of view of this commitment, every situation contains a unique drama.

Question: Are you saying that one no longer finds everything familiar?

Rinpoche: Situations need not be familiar. Ego's commitment tends to rely on a sense of familiarity or feeling that nothing is happening. A person might sit down to meditate and feel that nothing is happening even though he is extremely agitated. He has pain in his back, pain in his neck, and flies are buzzing all around. He is extremely agitated and yet he feels that nothing is happening. But it is possible to experience every moment as having individuality in it. Once you are in a situation, you go along with the unique patterns of it, its particular textures and so on. This is quite different from ego's commitment to maintaining itself as a solid thing. Ego would find acknowledging the unique individuality of every situation extremely threatening. But relating that way to each situation as it is is a path. There is a great deal of movement in it. You are constantly facing a drama of some kind.

Question: But then there is no other direction than that of each situation?

Rinpoche: That is a much more definite kind of direction than having

a map or blueprint to follow. It is a real direction. Pain will be real pain and pleasure will be real pleasure. Confusion will be real confusion. Every situation will be a true situation, a precise one—and that is the guidance, that is the pattern that you go along with. Looking back we find that all the situations in which we have had a sense of making a journey were situations of living constantly in the present moment. There was no sense of predestination involved at all. The present situation is the destination as well as the path.

Many people wish to secure their destination in the future now. But the future is not here yet, that is why it is the future. It is amazing the extent to which we deceive ourselves, stretching ourselves to all sorts of territories and situations that are purely imaginary. It is as though the whole future is planned and a planned time has been stretched all the way back from the present moment and all the way forward from the present moment. Then everything is overcrowded. Looking at things this way we manage to set ourselves into a great deal of paranoia and panic. But if one really sees the present situation as it is, it is always a quite simple one.

Question: Can you speak about when one is sitting in meditation and bodily discomforts arise and one is taken up by the feeling of discomfort and boredom? But then one oscillates from this to the commentary that the discomfort and so on is just something for one to cling to as an entertainment. But then one clings to the commentary. And somehow there is nothing there in any of these moments which is free. There is only oscillation back and forth between these various clingings.

Rinpoche: It seems that the idea of the commentary and trying to make something out of it becomes self-destructive or confusing. There is an analogy used in the scriptures of discursive mind being like a silkworm. A silkworm has a web of its own substance around it. It survives by churning out more silk. You see, the situation is very simple. When bodily pain or pleasure arise, it is very simple. You just perceive it and just leave it. You do not have to put it through any process of any kind. Each situation is unique. Therefore you just go along with it, let it happen according to its nature.

Question: I guess what I can't quite understand is what you mean by "go along with."

Rinpoche: It is a matter of acceptance. Even though the acceptance of what is happening may be confusing, just accept the given situation and

do not try to make it something else; do not try to make it into an educational process at all. Just see it, perceive it, and then abandon it. If you experience something and then disown that experience, you provide a space between that knowledge and yourself which permits it simply to take its course. Disowning is like the yeast in the fermentation process. That process brews a state of mind in which you begin to learn and feel properly.

Question: Does it matter if the disowning is only another form of commentary in the beginning? Or is that inevitable?

Rinpoche: You cannot start from absolute, complete perfection. Being perfect does not matter. Just perceive and experience and disown. It does not matter how and what. The problem is that we always want to start something and at the same time make sure that what we are doing is right. But somehow we just cannot have that kind of insurance. One really has to take a chance and accept the raw and rugged quality of the situation. You could have a commentary-type situation where there is constant analysis involved. But that analysis is just part of the process. Just leave it that way. It does not have to become final. There is nothing the matter with your commentary as long as you do not try to take it as a final conclusion. You should not try to make it into a definite, recorded message with the idea of playing it back when you need it. Because when you play it back, you will be in a different situation so that it will automatically be out-of-date.

Question: In the moment when that commentary exists, there is so much clinging to that commentary.

Rinpoche: The commentary, without being given special value, is okay. It is just chatter. That is okay. Let it be that way. You should not interfere with that energy that is going through.

Question: When a conflict arises, I usually feel that I have control of the situation. I feel that I can make a choice. But now I am wondering whether I actually make a choice or not.

Rinpoche: There is nothing the matter with the idea of choice. In dealing with a situation, the choice is there already. The choice consists of two aspects of the situation that are happening at the same time; those two aspects provide a basis for your making a relationship with either of the alternatives. The way to work with that is, in making that choice, not to go according to your sense of comfort but to go according to straightforwardness. If there are two choices, one is ahead of you, right

in front of you, and the other choice is slightly off-center. There may be ten or twelve hundred choices, but there is one choice waiting for you on the road. The rest of them are waiting on the side, as sidetracks. Therefore the other choices waiting on the side become more attractive, like restaurants and drive-in movies on the side of the road. The choice has to be straightforward, based on common sense, basic sanity. Actually, it is transcendental common sense.

One could misunderstand what I have been saying. If I say that by going along with the present situation the future becomes quite clear, that could be misunderstood in the sense that everything is marked out for you. It could be misunderstood in the sense of there being divine guidance. You could think that everything has been prepared for you so you can immediately find your place, as in the saying, "The swan is in the lake and the vulture is in the graveyard." This is not quite the case. Relating with the present moment is quite difficult and painful in many cases. Although it is straightforward, a straight road, it is quite a painful one. It is like the bardo experience mentioned in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. You have a brilliant light coming at you with the image of a certain tathagatha peering at you from within it. And on the side there is a less brilliant, less irritating light. The light from the side is much more beautiful because it is less glaring, only a reflection of the tathagatha. So there are two choices. Should we go into the irritating one or should we just turn off on one of the sidetracks.

This symbolism from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is very profound for our actual, everyday life situation. It does not have to refer only to after-death experience. Perhaps the after-death experience just typifies the kind of situation in which choices are most enlightening or stimulating and most immediate. In our ordinary life situation we have to open ourselves and investigate and see and then make a commitment. Without choice, there would be no leap and no moment of letting go at all. Because of choice, therefore, there is a moment of leap, and letting go happens. So it seems that it is not particularly comforting and blissful and easy. On the other hand, it could be inspiring. That much at least could be said.

Question: You seem to be talking about the discovery of wisdom. Could you say more about that?

Rinpoche: The discovery of wisdom has nothing to do with the centralized quality of ego. It is not actually a discovery at all because *you*

cannot see that you are discovering. You become part of wisdom. You transcend the transcendental knowledge of prajna and you reach to the level of the jnana, real wisdom. This is actually very disappointing because we would like to watch ourselves being enlightened. But that is impossible. That rewarding experience of confirmation, that finally you have made it, here you are, is impossible. That would never happen.

Question: When you make choices you don't seem to have to think about it, but something spontaneous leaps up and makes the choice before you think about it. Before you can choose, something else makes the choice for you.

Rinpoche: It all depends on how much of a big deal you make out of the choice itself. If you do not make a big deal about the choice, you cannot be conned or seduced by anything on the sidetrack. By the time those seductions arise, you are going on anyway. So you go ahead, you go straight.

Question: Is this straightforward choice the same as intuition?

Rinpoche: It is spacious intuition, intuition which is not based on the animal level of instinct. It is the kind of true intuition that is not connected with the survival of ego.

Question: In this context of making choices, where does "crazy wisdom" come in?

Rinpoche: Crazy wisdom is the sort of basic impetus behind the whole process of working with the situation. In order to make a decision that is straightforward but not particularly pleasurable, one has to have some power behind one. That is the element of crazy wisdom, that basic power behind the situation. But this does not mean that you should just find the most painful alternative and make your decisions according to that. The tendency here does not have to be suicidal, masochistic. You would not get into that either.

Question: Again in relation to choice, I was thinking about the forms of divination that you mention in *Born in Tibet.* Is a technique of divination used in a situation where there is a vagueness about going straight ahead?

Rinpoche: Divination is generally used when you are somewhat trapped by the situation. You really have no alternative, but you are too cowardly to commit yourself to your actual intuition of the straightforwardness. So you turn to the pretense of divination. And what happens in divination is that, even though you may be highly biased in your view

of the situation, you pretend not to be. You step out of the situation altogether and then you open your mind and allow yourself to make a decision in accordance with the divination practice. Or, more precisely, once you are there in no-man's-land, the answer is there already. Then you come back to your own territory and make a decision.

Question: So it is not that divination has the answer, but rather that it is a vehicle for stepping out?

Rinpoche: Yes. Divination is like a sword. So you take the step and you use it. You cut the doubt.

Question: I find a certain seductive and fascinating quality in getting into and submitting to the teaching. There is a feeling of something very strange and novel and open, and one is pulled along quite willingly. But at the same time I am suspicious of the fascination aspect of it.

Rinpoche: We have to allow ourselves some stepping-stones. It is not necessary to be so severe. You see, that is the wonderful thing about the four noble truths—they begin from duhkha, pain. They start from the bottom where the most important things are, rather than from the top where the most refined things are—the cream and all. It starts from the spices and minerals and everything that floats down to the bottom. You begin with the dirty work, but that in itself becomes a stepping-stone. And then gradually, more and more, you discover the top layer. And since you discover it gradually, it comes as no surprise. Whereas if one starts with the beautiful and rich things in the top layer, then one does not want to come down because there is the possibility of finding other things underneath. One does not want to associate with that. One begins to discover that there is something fishy. You do not want to go down to the bottom because you fear you will discover something unpleasant. So we begin from underneath, with the most gross part. That is our starting point. One does not have to start perfect or beautiful. Starting from the bottom, the whole structure is fundamentally sound. Since you have already dealt with the worst things, what worse could happen?

In our style of teaching, we could start from the cream. But then a person would not be satisfied with the cream because he has not been given any impression of the value of it. Therefore we have to go through the whole evaluation process. We have to start from the bottom and then come up. That could be called a useless game from the point of view of enlightenment itself, but from the point of view of the unpeel-

ing, the unmasking process, it is necessary. It is a game, the practice is a game, but one has to go through it.

There is a story of a mother and child living together. And the child asks the mother, "Where is my father?" And the mother says, "He is a wonderful person, but you cannot find him." The child gets very curious about his father and the mother keeps telling him stories about how wonderful his father is. The child's expectations get more and more built up until finally the situation reaches a point where the mother actually has to take him to see the father. So the mother takes her son out the front door of the house, and the two go up into the mountains. They climb steep slopes and cross streams and labor over all kinds of obstacles. Finally they reach a ridge from where they can look down. They look down and see a valley with a house in it. The mother says, "That house down there is where your father lives." Then they climb down to the house and enter at the back door. In the room, they find a man, and the mother tells her son, "This is your father." After the tremendous effort of the journey, climbing and walking a long way, the child is tremendously excited and very pleased to find his wonderful father. Then the child discovers a door on the other side of the room that leads into the very same house where he had always lived with his mother. The mother could have taken her son directly through the door to see the father, but the child would not have appreciated him unless they had made this journey. If the mother just took the child from one room to the other, it would not have been anything.

Practice and Intellect

IT SEEMS THAT in this seminar we have been able only to undertake a simplified synopsis of abhidharma and to provide some impression of the fundamental principles underlying the abhidharma descriptions. To study abhidharma in detail would require a lot more time. Still I think we have gotten an idea of the general outlines of abhidharma as a sort of psychological map. I think our exchange has been quite rich, and I hope this seminar will sow the seed of further study on this material.

The main thing that we have been trying to do is to make the study of this particular subject experiential. Some attempt has been made toward an approach that would permit a practitioner to become a scholar and a scholar to become a practitioner. This can be done if we work closely enough with our basic psychology and with our basic process of intellectual understanding. So our approach has been quite unique. No perfect scholar would study this way and no perfect practitioner would look at the subject as we have. On the other hand, an open scholar and an open practitioner might both find it quite appropriate.

Looking at abhidharma this way, nothing is terribly abstract. A lot of the ideas might be abstract if isolated as ideas; but actually they are not abstract because they have real bearing on our personal experience. The psychology of one's own being shows the operation of the five skandhas and the whole pattern that they are part of.

Most studies of abhidharma tend to regard the five skandhas as separate entities. As we have seen, this is not the case; rather they constitute an overall pattern of natural growth or evolution. This fact alone could bring a lot of understanding. Without seeing that the five are part of an overall pattern that has been clearly understood, one might want to ask,

"Why five skandhas? Why not ten? Why not one?" If five were just a random number, if the basic approach were arbitrary, there would be no end to the collections and classifications that we could concoct. But the way of looking at abhidharma that we have attempted makes it possible to see that the idea of five stages is not just random. It makes it possible to see that there is a general pattern which has five fundamental aspects. Of course, it is not absolutely necessary to talk about five aspects in order to see that evolutionary pattern. The understanding of that pattern is also reflected in a number of other sets of classifications that we have not had a chance to discuss. The fundamental point of abhidharma is to see the overall psychological pattern rather than, necessarily, the five thises and the ten thats. This kind of primary insight can be achieved by combining the approaches of the scholar and the practitioner.

There is an immense wealth of teachings that, hopefully in the future, we will be able to study in this manner. It is not necessary to look at the subject matter in just a simpleminded, emotional way, nor in just a cold analytical way. Scholarship and direct insight can work together. Teaching in this way is, in a sense, more of a matter of stimulating interest than purely conveying information. And therefore it applies to students no matter what stage of sophistication they have achieved. That is why it is said, "The dharma is good at the beginning, the dharma is good in the middle, and the dharma is good at the end." Each presentation of the dharma has its own unique qualities, for advanced students as well as beginners. One thing continues right through the stages, which is what is called "the secret doctrine." The secret teaching goes on throughout. Discussing abhidharma, somehow we have covered more than abhidharma. We have touched a great deal on some of the tantric possibilities involved in a further odyssey into the teaching. All this is what is known as "self-secret." There is no copyright and nothing is being hidden. Everything is presented, as much as could possibly be understood. But a great deal could be secret from the audience's point of view. If one is not ready to hear the advanced aspects of the subject, one hears it purely from a beginner's point of view. Whereas if one is ready to hear in a semi-grown-up style, one hears in that way.

So the responsibility for understanding a seminar is not based solely on the speaker nor solely on the audience. We manufacture it together. It is our child that we produce; it is our dance. And as the dance takes place, the music happens by itself. When things happen in this way, they

have a living quality. This is not purely experimental. At the same time as being alive, there is something established and familiar about it. Even though exchange happens spontaneously, the subjects that arise in our talks and discussions are not arising for the first time. This has happened before, many times over again. Generations and generations of people have thought this way and found out and understood this way, spontaneously, as we have. And the ideas have been handed down and presented. It is like a good baker handing down his knowledge of baking. The knowledge is, in a sense, old, but each time the bread is baked, it is hot and fresh. There is no cold bread. Still there is that knowledge of baking which is very established, even though the bread is baked on the spot. This can be very inspiring. Once one is committed to the teachings, this living and inspiring quality is there continuously.

We could have discussion.

Question: I am still not sure about the relation between practice and the intellect. Do we have to keep them separate, or is there some way that we can use intellect in our practice?

Rinpoche: Let me tell you something about my own training. In Tibet we not only attended talks but also memorized the texts; every day we had to memorize about six pages. The following day someone would be chosen by lottery to present what he had heard the day before, with the commentary and everything. And he would be asked questions about what he had heard the day before. There was no way of getting out of it. At the beginning it was quite a good discipline. But at a certain stage the whole thing became very monotonous. It felt like we were being programmed into this structure of scholarly learning. We couldn't hear things anymore; we just memorized the words. We could even discuss the subject from an intellectual point of view, but we didn't really understand it. We couldn't properly hear ourselves, let alone what other people were saying. Usually such a course would take about six months. We would learn the abhidharma text itself and the Indian commentary, and then the Tibetan commentary on that commentary. There were also various theses written on particular abhidharma subjects from the point of view of the Gelukpas, the Kagyüpas, the Sakyapas, the Nyingmapas, and so on. So we would try to bring everything together. But it was just too much material. Somehow it had the hypnotic effect of hearing something over and over and over. The teachings echoed in our heads

continuously; we even dreamt about them. When we would get up in the morning, certain quotations would pop into our heads. Finally the six-month course of study was finished. We were told that we had learned abhidharma, but we thought we really had not heard anything. We were just happy to get rid of the whole thing so we could relax, go off for a summer holiday or something. But somehow we couldn't really take a complete vacation; the discipline kept coming back to us constantly. We realized afterward that we were really involved with the teaching. Whatever we were doing, talking to people, walking in the mountains, riding a horse, or camping on the mountainside, abhidharma would come back constantly to haunt us like a ghost. Then we would begin to understand a few things, maybe just one or two ideas at the beginning, but as we got into it more and more, we began to get curious about the whole thing. Just out of curiosity, we would open the book and read a few little passages. And they began to mean something.

The point is that certain things may be out of your reach. But if you have the discipline to listen to them, at a certain moment they become appropriate to you. They come back to you automatically, by themselves, rather than by your attempt to really tune in to them and work on them.

Question: What you just touched on is something I have not been clear about for a long time, namely, using a form of conditioning in the service of becoming free of conditioning. My thinking has been that all it does is just stuff one up with more material, whereas I am really interested in being free of conditioning.

Rinpoche: I suppose that's largely dependent on the type of conditioning involved. For instance, the intense indoctrination taking place in China is very impressive at the moment because you can see what they have achieved by it. But as soon as you step out of China, the whole thing becomes irrelevant; the conditioning doesn't apply once you step out of that environment. Whereas certain ideas that do apply to you personally may be particularly obvious at the time. But even if you step out of the learning situation, they are still applicable, even more so. In meditation practice you start by putting yourself into a conditioning process. But by doing that, the conditioning itself wears out. The process of conditioning begins to develop seeds, but the conditioning itself goes away. Then the seeds begin to ferment.

Question: Don't you get a little high on this fermentation?

Rinpoche: You always get high.

Question: What's the difference between having these ideas coming back to you in daily life and the kind of extraneous commentary you have characterized as the "spiritual adviser"?

Rinpoche: The idea of a spiritual adviser is more the pious attitude of trying to be good and spiritual all the time. Whereas in this case you have no idea of what you should be doing, you just go along doing your ordinary things. The ideas just pop up. Of course if you begin to hold on to them, it could turn into a spiritual adviser. We are talking about ideas breaking through spontaneously, which is quite different from the deliberate spiritual adviser of ego.

Question: Then should one's approach to the abhidharma scriptures be more like reading a novel than studying something so that you can use it in a particular way later? Should we approach it in a way which is more free of purpose, something like a chess game or a puzzle, and forget about trying to apply it to our meditation?

Rinpoche: Yes and no. You can go too far. Finally you may find that you are not reading at all, because not reading is more appealing or you are sick of the whole boring subject. You have to have some discipline of applying your mind to it. You should think in terms of how you could apply it to yourself. But if you become too ambitious, trying to digest every little detail, you can't do it.

The idea is to try to feel the general outline of the whole thing rather than being too faithful to every sentence, every word. That kind of attitude has become a big problem in the study of Buddhism. If you are too involved with details, you might lose the perspective as a whole. But if you are able to feel the whole pattern, the outline of the whole thing, you will find it much more applicable to your life. And once that has happened, the details begin to come up by themselves—spontaneously. For instance, if you have a basic understanding of the development of the five skandhas, you have a feeling for the whole process, so the details cease to become isolated, disconnected facts. Instead they are just part of that map.

Question: Is there a point, if you learn these things more or less by rote, where they become a part of your feelings and your conceptions?

Rinpoche: There seem to be two ways to approach it: the highly disciplined way of taking in everything without choice, or trying to work along with your interest. But if you take the second approach, that inter-

est should bear on the overall context so that you don't get carried away by fascination for one particular aspect of the subject.

Question: Supposing that one is quite willing to give up any idea of choice and to take in anything that might eventually become a part of oneself.

Rinpoche: Well, that suits one type of personality. It's the kind of conditioning process that we have been talking about, like meditation. Whether you like it or not, you go on meditating. It may not be particularly pleasurable, in fact it could be extremely boring. Memorizing or reading doesn't have to be directed only toward apparently profound or highfalutin subjects. It could be very ordinary and simple. From that simplicity you can learn a great deal. There was a tradition in Tibet that certain teachers were expert on particular short writings of various great teachers. Every year a camp was set up and these teachings were presented very simply. Hundreds of people attended these summer study groups, although the same thing was said every year in exactly the same way. But each year they went a little bit further in their understanding. Not only the students but the teachers themselves found that each year it was as though they had never read those particular sentences before.

Question: When you said that the reading is to be applied to our meditation, you didn't mean thinking about it during meditation, did you?

Rinpoche: No, but by providing some sense of space and openness, meditation is good preparation for reading. If you allow yourself some gap or space to rest by sitting down and doing absolutely nothing, you recover from your speed. Then you are in the right state of being to read and absorb more.

Question: When we first start noticing some of the things we have learned about in abhidharma in our own psychological processes, how can we see the interconnectedness of these processes and not just get hung up on identifying them: "Aha, I see this! It talks about it in the abhidharma."

Rinpoche: If you recognize something on the spot that way, it is automatically interconnected. That inspiration is based on the cause-and-effect pattern that is part of the whole. But I think the main point is that one shouldn't get carried away with pride about finding something in your being that matches the abhidharma. The point is not to fit things into some system or to prove anything to yourself, but to see the pattern as it is. You just recognize it and go on. It is not a big deal.

Question: I don't understand the time scale that the twelve nidanas

happen on. Do they happen in each moment, or does it take a whole lifetime or many lives?

Rinpoche: They take place every moment. The twelve types of chain reaction have to take place in order to bring daily experience into action. They form a pattern. They are not independent; each of them depends on the previous one as well as the next one. But that whole development could happen in one fraction of a second. The abhidharma compares the twelve nidanas to a stack of paper. You could put a needle through it in one second. If that process were divided so that you could consider the point at which the needle penetrated the first piece of paper, then the next, then the next, there would be twelve of them. And those twelve could be divided into three parts each—touching, penetrating, coming through and touching the next one. This process, which constitutes ego mind, can be divided endlessly, which is why ego as a solid thing does not exist. It cannot be found in any part of this process. Things happen very momentarily, and there is no solid independent thing such as me and mine.

Question: Does that mean that each moment is one of these cycles of twelve?

Rinpoche: Yes.

Question: Let's say I was able to see each step in the process—

Rinpoche: You wouldn't be able to see each step in the process. It would be impossible.

Question: What could you see?

Rinpoche: You could perceive the whole pattern, perceive it rather than see it. Regardless how sharp your mind was, you couldn't see them as long as you regarded each of the twelve as separate.

Question: You mean you could perceive it by being part of it?

Rinpoche: Yes, you could be part of it, and you could feel it that way.

Question: What is the thread of continuity between those twelve steps?

Rinpoche: The process begins with ignorance and ends with death and then death produces ignorance again. It goes on and on.

Question: But there must be a thread of connection, otherwise there would be absolutely no continuity. I would see you one moment and the next moment I would be sitting in England seeing my mother.

Rinpoche: The body is the connection. The mind/body, rather than the physical body, that is, the central headquarters of ego. You report

back to your mind/body, your nest. If you ask a person, "How do you know that you are what you are?" the only simple way of explaining it is by saying "I see myself in the mirror. I am what I am. I have a body." But if you try to go beyond that and find some further principle to base it on, you would not find anything. That's why the *Heart Sutra* says, "There is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body. . . ." Your eye is just an eye, it's not your eye; your nose is a nose, but it's not your nose. Nobody is you. Through the whole system of your body, every part has its own name, its own place. It is made out of a lot of things, but there is no such thing as you.

So one begins to transcend the mind/body, one's version of the body as a solid thing, by seeing the individuality of each particle in the body. But you do not have to destroy the body. You learn through the body.

Question: So your teaching is to try to show us how to transcend our attachments, which constitute the mind/body.

Rinpoche: We are not exactly transcending the notion of a body altogether, but we are trying to step out of the tendency toward nesting in the body, that tremendous security notion we have that the body is a fortified place and that we can go back to our fort. Even if we get beyond that, continuity does not seem to be a big problem. We still have to have some basis for dealing with other people because, having got beyond ego, we develop compassion and a sense of compassionate communication. In order to communicate with other people, there has to be somebody who is communicating, and that kind of continuity goes on. That has nothing to do with ego at all. Ego is imagination of a centralized nest that gives secure protection. You are frightened of the world outside of your projections, so you just go back into your sitting room and make yourself comfortable.

There is a general misconception about Buddhism in relation to this point. People wonder who, if there is no ego, is attaining enlightenment, who is performing all one's actions. If you have no ego, how can you eat, how can you sleep? In that case, ego is misunderstood to be the physical body rather than what it is—a paranoid insurance policy, the fortified nest of ego. Your being can continue without your being defensive about yourself. In fact you become more invincible if you are not defending yourself.

Well, this seems to be the end of the beginning of our learning process. So we will end our seminar and our seminar will continue.

Glimpses of Shunyata

Edited by Judith L. Lief

Talk One

Open Space of Shunyata

This seminar is on shunyata, although we are quite uncertain what shunyata actually is. It seems that shunyata means not that, not this. So we shouldn't have a discussion at all. If it's not that, not this—what else? We could sit around and scrounge up something to discuss, but it seems to be insignificant, totally irrelevant.

The expectation to hear about shunyata is an obstacle; the shunyata principle does not lie in the expectation. We might get into the idea of what shunyata means: *shunya* means "empty"; *ta* means "ness," so *shunyata* means "emptiness." It is vaguely connected with the idea of the attainment of enlightenment. The idea of the attainment of enlightenment is based on ignorance, which is the opposite of enlightenment. So if you accept shunyata, you have to accept ignorance and enlightenment simultaneously. Therefore the shunyata principle is accepting the language of samsara as the language of enlightenment. When we talk about aggression, passion, and confusion, that automatically is the language of shunyata: Aggression as opposed to what? Passion as opposed to what? Ignorance as opposed to what? That kind of open space is related to the shunyata principle.

What we are trying to achieve with this particular seminar is to understand shunyata as such—that does not exist because of this, this does not exist because of that. We expect some concrete answer, something definite, something solid, but solidity itself depends on frivolousness, so to speak. Shunyata as opposed to the natural situation, or things as they are, seems to be a very important point to work with. The idea of shun-

yata depends on what is not shunyata—which is based on ego's manifestation.

We would like an ego manifestation of solidity: "I would like to understand that; I would like to comprehend that; I would like to attain enlightenment." So the idea of shunyata is based on the ambition to understand what shunyata is. If you are willing to give away that basic ambition, then shunyata seems to be there already. Therefore the shunyata principle is not dependent on that or this; it is based on transcending dualistic perceptions—and at the same time dwelling on dualistic ideas. The mantra of shunyata is OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA, which means "Gone, gone, gone beyond, that which is related to basic enlightenment mind is the essence of everything."

As far as shunyata goes, that you decided to come and take part in this particular seminar is futile. You might meet with disappointment in that this seminar does not say what is or what isn't. And you cannot get your money's worth. In other words, you can't get your money back. Oh, no! You expect too much. You're not going to be refunded. It's *your* hang-up, expecting too much out of shunyata, which means nothing! But it means everything at the same time.

We could have a discussion if you like. Please.

Student: You mean to say our money is gone, gone, gone—[*Laughter*]

Vidyadhara: Somewhat.

Student: What's the relationship between shunyata and prajnaparamita?

Vidyadhara: Shunyata is the subject that prajnaparamita perceives.

Student: Is it still a dual situation?

Vidyadhara: Shunyata? Sure.

S: I thought you said it transcended dualism.

V: Non-shunyata. Nonemptiness.

S: I'm not sure I quite understand how shunyata can now be dual, because I thought you said shunyata transcended dualism.

V: Shunyata is, in this case, nondwelling. But nondwelling in itself means dwelling on nondwelling. So we have to transcend shunyata from that point of view.

S: That's like saying not-two is one. But in previous seminars not-

two is not-one, not-two—just the way things are. So nondwelling is not necessarily dwelling.

V: In previous seminars two is not one, in terms of meaning. But in this case, *one* is not one. [*Laughter*] [*Long pause*]

S: Well, why was the subject of shunyata ever brought up? [*Laughter*] Mentioning it seems to add something to the situation.

V: Because the subject of shunyata is there already.

S: I never thought of it! I never thought of shunyata. [*Laughter*]

V: Because of that, because you haven't thought of it, therefore it is there already. It happens.

S: You mean the absence of that thought itself is emptiness?

V: Yeah, somewhat.

Student: What do you think we should discuss tomorrow in our discussion period?

Vidyadhara: Shunyata. [*Laughter*]

Student: Is it prajna that is negating? Is it prajna saying not-this?

Vidyadhara: Not necessarily. You see, the whole point is that there is something worth exploring—and having explored the whole thing, we discover nothing. But it's not worth it not to explore either, because things are so. [*Vidyadhara snaps fan shut.*] GATE, GATE, PARAGATE, PARA*SAM*GATE, BODHI SVAHA.

S: Gone *safely* beyond, right?

V: No!

S: In my translation of the *Heart Sutra* it says, "Gone, gone, gone safely beyond."

V: Safely?! [*Laughter*]

S: "Safely beyond," yeah.

V: Must have been translated on Madison Avenue. [*Laughter*]

S: I doubt it.

V: Possibly.

S: So how do you translate it?

V: "Gone, gone, gone beyond, no security saves you whatever." *Para* means "beyond," like the idea of parapsychology, it means "beyond concept"—"gone, gone, gone beyond the idea of gone beyond"—*sam* means "complete"; *gate* means "gone." Simple.

Student: There's a translation that reads "gone *fully* beyond." Would you say that's a good one?

Vidyadhara: You don't need that kind of adjective [*laughter*]—because it is so! Black is black, white is white! So what, after that? It's as obvious as that.

Student: If prajna cuts through duality, is that an action that evolves into shunyata? Does the operation itself still remain after that?

Vidyadhara: It seems that if you think it is involved, it is so; whereas if you don't think it is involved, it does not exist. It is purely up to your expectations. Quite simple. It is purely up to you. The teaching depends on you. In other words, samsara depends on nirvana and nirvana depends on samsara.

S: What I was trying to get at is that there seems to be something that remains after shunyata, because you said that after shunyata you get non-shunyata.

V: That's up to you.

S: Excuse me?

V: That's up to you.

S: That's just a view?

V: Up to you, up to you! It depends on you! It doesn't have to be that way. If you want some security, it always happens that way.

S: There's a statement that emptiness is form and form is emptiness. Is there a progressive relationship between the two?

V: I don't think so, because they are defeating each other. The statements defeat each other. Emptiness is form, therefore form is emptiness—they are defeating each other all the time, destroying the previous statement successively. So you have nothing to dwell on at all. Black is white, white is black. The statements defeat each other all the time, so you don't have anything to dwell on anymore at all. That's it.

S: But the dwelling still exists, although faintly.

V: Doesn't exist.

S: It doesn't exist?

V: Because you are already busted. [*Laughter*]

S: As well as absorbed into nirvana.

V: I don't know about nirvana.

S: Whatever, yeah.

Student: Is there a relationship to skillful means?

Vidyadhara: That is skillful means!

S: Shunyata *is* skillful means?

V: Yes.

S: Then how come in the symbolism you have a symbol for each?

V: I've never seen a symbol for each.

S: I was under the impression that the dorje, or the thunderbolt, was symbolic of skillful means and the bell was symbolic of shunyata, and that Dorje Chang holds both of them and that they're joined together.

V: So what?

S: That is why I was asking you, so what?

V: I don't know. I have no idea! [*Laughter*] I don't understand about that!

S: Neither do I.

V: I don't know!

Student: What is the stage after shunyata?

Vidyadhara: I don't know! [*Laughter*]

S: Does anyone?

V: Your guess is as good as mine. I really don't know! [*Laughter*]

Student: There are all sorts of practices, like mahamudra, that come after the shunyata experience.

Vidyadhara: I don't know.

S: Who knows?

V: Nobody! I really don't know!

Student: Is it possible to be absorbed in shunyata materialistically, spiritually materialistically?

Vidyadhara: It is possible, definitely, yes. If you think you have grasped shunyata, you've been absorbed into it as a sedative, which is very dangerous. But beyond that there is no danger. So it is quite possible.

S: To be absorbed into it as a sedative?

V: Yes.

S: Could you explain what you mean by that?

V: Sedative! Quite simple.

S: To use it as a sedative you would have to *think* you've grasped shunyata.

V: Sure.

S: Which means you really haven't?

V: That's right. [*Laughter*] You are quite right. Well said!

Student: Is the sedative quality related to the fact that shunyata experience accompanies the idea of giving up expectations, but that giving up expectations is a hang-up?

Vidyadhara: Yes.

S: So the sedative quality comes from the fact that you've given everything up—

V: That you have some technique to do it. Technique is a sedative, as it usually is.

Student: Is it possible for the responses visualized through the tantras to be faster as a result of the breakthrough beyond duality?

Vidyadhara: It's possible, yes.

S: Is it spontaneity?

V: I think so. Spontaneity becomes hang-up.

Student: Is the technique holding in or putting more out?

Vidyadhara: Both. It depends on the person.

Student: Does shunyata mean not-hesitation, or is it just a concept?

Vidyadhara: It seems to be both. The idea of shunyata is a concept. You understand it to begin with, then you begin to dwell on it. That could be the cause of hang-ups or further concepts.

S: So it is a concept to begin with.

V: Yes.

S: So we don't exist without any hang-up.

V: It could be a hang-up, because there was a concept at the beginning that sent a message down to the underworld of security. It could become a hang-up, or problem, because you have something to hang on to as a handle.

Student: Would you have thoughts?

Vidyadhara: Well, that's a problem—

S: But would you be one with the thoughts?

V: —because the whole thing is one with your thoughts. The concept of shunyata is involved with your thoughts; therefore the whole thing

becomes a hang-up. Thoughts are usually concerned with what is not directed to you and what is directed to you; there is hope and fear as to what is for you, what is not for you. Constant fear or hope is involved.

S: Well, I meant thoughts in the sense that if you have a retinocyclograph machine, whenever a light flashes into your eyes, usually there is a corresponding thought, a certain kind of mental registration.

V: They're the same thing. That is thought.

S: Right. I'm just trying to think about if in shunyata you'd still have that kind of thought process.

V: I don't think so. In shunyata, these particular details are not involved—aggression or passion or accuracy or whatever. In shunyata, the whole idea of thought is things as they are, which is not dependent on logical proof. It transcends proof.

S: Is that a state of total awareness?

V: Somewhat.

Student: You talked about the idea of shunyata as being a sedative, but could it be that shunyata is an antidote to suffering in the dark? Would it then be the same kind of sedative?

Vidyadhara: I don't think so. Shunyata looks at the definite quality of pain—pain as pain, pleasure as pleasure. It can be quite simple.

S: But if it's the actual empty nature of pain—I mean, isn't pain something that we think of as solid?

V: No, in shunyata experience you don't see the empty nature of pain at all. Pain is pain in its own existence because form is form and emptiness is emptiness. It sees its own identity as such a definite thing, constantly.

S: So it just acknowledges?

V: Feels it and acknowledges it as it is.

Student: I was wondering, as a result of the relationship of subject and object, or observer and observed, you have a sort of duality set up. When duality is destroyed, does the observer become one with the observed, or do the observer and the observed both in a sense vanish?

Vidyadhara: That's right, yes.

S: Vanish into one.

V: Yes.

S: But it's not sequential, that the observed disappears and the observer doesn't, but the two simultaneously?

V: Neither would it be nonsequential, the observer and what is observed.

S: Yeah. In other words, discontinuity becomes continuous.

V: Yes.

S: Good.

V: Somewhat.

S: Why only somewhat?

V: Why not? [*Laughter*]

S: Every time you say "somewhat," there's the idea that we miss something.

V: Beyond doubt.

S: Beyond a doubt? Then you should not say "somewhat," you should say "precisely!"

V: No. You could say "somewhat." You have stretched over all areas, therefore you are imperial, you are the master of the whole situation. Therefore, *somewhat!* [*Laughter*] When you say "precise," you become a little businessman. *Somewhat.* If you say "something"—that's different. When you say "somewhat," you have preserved your whole thing.

S: You mean when you say "somewhat" it's more than just a little point but—

V: Precisely, yes. [*Much laughter*]

I think we should close this meeting tonight. We could have a discussion period tomorrow and some sitting practice as well. And we could discuss further what is known as shunyata—what *is* shunyata.

Thank you for coming.

Talk Two

Ground

I SUPPOSE WE HAVE TO SEE the basic principle of shunyata in terms of practice and theory. In terms of theory, all kinds of philosophical speculations about shunyata could be discussed. But in terms of practice, how does a person perceive the shunyata principle in terms of the practical experience of daily living? The sense of shunyata is what we are discussing rather than the philosophy of shunyata. The sense of shunyata—what is it all about? Shunyata simply means emptiness, nothingness. But there is something more than that. When we talk about emptiness, that automatically means the absence of fullness. So we have to get into what is full and what makes it empty.

There are three principles of shunyata: emptiness as ground, emptiness as path, emptiness as fruition. As far as emptiness as ground is concerned, before we begin on the path, there is no beginning. So one doesn't begin on the path as a solid path, as one imagines, but by realizing and understanding that the basic ground is *so*—without searching particularly or trying to capture the experience of the ground as a starting point.

The starting point itself, the basic ground of shunyata or emptiness, is that one has to know a sense of no beginner. In other words, a complete understanding of egolessness is the starting point. Without that, there is no understanding of shunyata. So you have no solid ground to work with or to walk on. That is to say, you are not going to liberate yourself in order to attain enlightenment. You have to give up the notion of liberation at the beginning—and that also applies to the shunyata principle.

Shunyata, or emptiness, is empty of subject-object relationship. Nonexistent subject, nonexistent object. Perceiver and perceptions do not exist. As far as the groundwork is concerned, there is no definite ground. As long as there is definite ground on the spiritual quest, it becomes a struggle, a deliberate attitude of achievement. And once we begin to be aware of our process of searching as an ambitious struggle, that struggle automatically becomes a formulated struggle—a struggle with ideas, a struggle with theology, concept—which is perpetually creating samsaric mind rather than the spiritual path. The spiritual path becomes religion from that point of view, pejoratively speaking.

So the shunyata experience seems to be that which frees us from religiosity and leads us to true spirituality. Religion in this sense is dogma. You are already a bad person, a condemned person, you contain all kinds of wickedness and you should take those faults and problems seriously. You should try to get into a reformation process, or if you can't do that, you should take a vow and promise to somebody, "At whatever cost it might take, I won't do it again. It won't happen, I can assure you. I promise not to be naughty anymore. From today onward, I'll be good. I'm ashamed of what I was, but at the same time I am proud of what I might be in the future." Some kind of primitive positive thinking.

The shunyata principle has an entirely different perspective and feel to the whole thing. We do not think that we are naughty or being bad or that we are condemned. Instead we accept at the same time the destructive qualities in our basic mechanism as well as the positive qualities in our mechanism, so we have no ground to have a battle at all. In other words, the shunyata principle is a clear principle in which at the beginning, as far as the groundwork of shunyata is concerned, no battleground is provided—good fighting evil, evil fighting good, and so forth. It is free of all territories. Both good and bad could coexist. We are acknowledging that process but not regarding it as a defeat—or a promise, for that matter. In other words, dualistic mind has become confused. As soon as dualistic mind exists on the basic ground, it has to fight or to make love, it has to define enemy and friend. It cannot exist without all of those. So the shunyata perspective shows us a new dimension: in order to exist, we don't have to fight anymore and we don't have to grasp anymore at all.

It is a very powerful thing that we could *be* by doing nothing. In fact we be by not being. We could be by not being—that is the basic ground

of shunyata. Struggle does not play an important part in order to exist. In other words, we could live without breathing. It sounds illogical: we can't live without breathing, can we? But somehow the definition of existence is that nonexistence could exist; therefore it is existence. Nonexistence could exist; therefore the samsaric process goes on and alogical things could happen; such eccentric ideas as shunyata could exist in the world. Absolutely nonsensical! Doesn't make any sense. How could I exist without fighting? How could I exist without grasping? Does that mean I should not eat food and I should not defend myself from dangers? One might ask that question. The answer is yes! You don't have to consume projections in order to exist, and you don't have to fight projections in order to exist either, metaphorically speaking.

There is a ground process in which we could accommodate everything that goes on without making a big deal out of it—the ground shunyata principle, the absence of hope and fear. We don't have to strategize further ways of maintaining ourselves or existing ourselves at all. This is negating the existence of that; having negated the existence of that, therefore that automatically negates the existence of this at the same time. The ground shunyata principle. You could say that is the experience of freedom, being ultimately free. We do not have to associate ourselves with good or evil. It is true spirituality, positive thinking: good is good in its own way, unconditioned good; bad is bad in its own way, unconditioned bad; and both could coexist on the basic ground.

That ground shunyata principle starts the inspiration for the practice of meditation. Any formal practice of meditation could be said to be that nondualistic approach, equilibrium in its fullest sense. You provide ground, acknowledge the ground with certain techniques that have been presented to you. The techniques themselves are also expressions of that unbiased approach. They do not express or suggest struggle at all. The techniques are just existing, such as working with breathing, working with walking. Existing, working with existence, is the technique.

So the ground of the shunyata principle is basically uncolored by dogma or by concept. It is not philosophizing the whole thing but actually doing it, being involved in a process that is without dogma. The basic principle of shunyata, of seeing beyond dualistic process, goes on from that. One wonders what else is left with the path and the goal. That whole approach of the groundwork seems to be the path and the goal.

But we will discuss them later. It is amazing that we can make something out of nothing!

Questions?

Student: There's an experience that people call a shunyata experience—that's a term—would you use that term yourself?

Vidyadhara: Yes, somewhat.

S: Could you please explain how that is related to what you call clear light experience?

V: I think we are going to go through that in tonight's talk and tomorrow's talk.

S: Maybe I could ask you one more. The shunyata experience has a terrifying quality to it—

V: Definitely, yes.

S: —to people who are into their egos. [*Laughter*] As you are getting into that experience, it has a sort of stark, barren feeling to it. If you were prepared to get into that experience, would that feeling instead get into a singing, musical sort of quality? I don't know if that's right. In other words, where the familiar boundaries begin to dissolve, if you're prepared to accept that experience, it sort of goes into a dance or musical quality.

V: Well, it is obviously a terrifying prospect that you cannot have ground to struggle with, that all the ground is being taken away from you. The carpet is pulled out from under your feet. You are suspended in nowhere—which generally happens anyway, whether we acknowledge it as it actually happens or not. Once we begin to be involved with some understanding, or evolve ourselves toward understanding the meaning of life or of spirituality, we have no further reinforcement—nothing but just being captivated by the fact that something is not quite right, something is missing somewhere.

You have to give in somewhere, somewhat—unless you begin to physically maintain that particular religious trip by successive chantings, pujas, and ritual ceremonies. Or you may try to organize that spiritual scene administratively—answering telephones, writing letters, conducting tours of the community. Then you feel that you are doing something. Otherwise, there is no ground to relate with, none whatsoever—if you are really dealing with the naked body as an individuality, an individual person who is getting into the practice of a spiritual way. Even

with a person's obligations, administrative work, or liturgical job within the spiritual scene, he or she has nothing left on the spiritual way.

You seem to regard your basic existence to be related with spirituality as a definite thing. By maintaining it through primitive language, you feel you have ground. But when the primitive language is removed from your relation to spirituality, you have nothing to relate with anymore at all. Terrifying! You have lost the whole ground. One is thrown back to the practice then, and the practice is very alien, spooky. "Does that mean that I cannot give a tour explaining to people the meaning behind this particular spiritual scene? Does that mean that I cannot conduct ceremonies, services, or perform holy sacraments?" There is the sense that your badges and your uniform have been taken away from you. It is not that this process could take place only if somebody took them away from you officially and formally. But halfway through, you begin to realize that your uniform does not really answer questions and it does not really mean anything as such at all. You are suspended in nowhere. That's the shunyata experience. No ground to walk on, no ground to work with. You have no function.

From that point of view, the idea of the bodhisattva's work, compassionate work, also could be regarded as an occupation. If you regard yourself as a professional bodhisattva, suddenly you realize that you can't be involved with the professionalism of a bodhisattva anymore. So the whole thing is completely wiped out. Your existence has no meaning because you want to be a bodhisattva, but you find that you can't be a bodhisattva. Your practice of the six paramitas is removed from your face, completely wiped out.

So what to do next—scream? Commit suicide? Attack what? Rage war? Once you begin to wage war against something, you know that the war will end one day. So that doesn't seem to be a permanent, secure occupation either. [*Laughter*] Somebody has to win or lose. Particularly if you don't want to win, you win. So the whole process is very scary. You could say that it is a dance, if you like. I'm afraid it is not a particularly musical one. [*Laughter*]

Student: What is the relation of wanting to the ground, wanting in itself—not wanting any particular thing, but just wanting. You say that I don't have to fight, but I want to fight, I *want*. And this obscures the ground. The wanting goes on, wanting in itself.

Vidyadhara: Well, the whole point is that if you want, that means that you are afraid of being without an occupation. You want something because you haven't got it.

S: I want!

V: Because you haven't got it.

S: I have wanted! I want!

V: Yes, but you can't want unless you don't have it.

S: Unless I don't have wanting.

V: Unless you don't have whatever you want, and therefore you want. That means you are standing on nothingness. Do you see what I mean? For instance, what if you say that I want to go to the moon?

S: I don't want any specific thing, I just want. I have wanting.

V: Well, that's the whole thing.

S: That attaches itself, the wanting attaches itself.

V: It means basically you haven't got it.

S: Right. Now, I don't want to want shunyata, because I won't have it if I want it. And I don't want the ground, because if I want it, I won't have the ground. I'm asking, how can I get rid of wanting without *wanting* to get rid of wanting?

V: Well, I suppose the whole point is that you have to acknowledge your double poverty. You are poor and you realize that because you are poor therefore you are poor. Because there is space, therefore you know there is space. *Realizing* space is another matter. But the realizer also realizes there is no space and there is also space. It is threatening, extremely threatening. In other words, you see something, but you are not really seeing. From this point of view, the shunyata principle is extraordinary. It sounds demonic or negative, extraordinarily negative. Unless we acknowledge that negativity of poverty and loss of ground, we cannot relate to the shunyata principle.

S: The problem is that wanting is incorporated into the emotional system. It's almost automatic. It's in the emotions! And it doesn't go away because I see all this.

V: No, but if you see that it is hopeless, then you don't try to strategize anymore. You give up the whole trip. It's not a question of realizing that you could stop wanting, which means you are still hanging on to something. You see what I mean?

S: Yeah, but the habit system is also built in there, the habit around the wanting. So if we let some stimulus appear, any kind, that emotion

and habit will go right to work in the moment, right? So this is the problem, to dissolve that.

V: Well, you don't have to dissolve it. Just dwell on the problem and problem itself will begin to become hopelessness [*laughter*], which can't be saved. You can't be saved.

S: I'm not trying to be saved.

V: That's the whole problem. [*Laughter*] Unless you realize you can't be saved—

S: Oh, I *can't* be saved. Different point.

V: —there's no other way. It is the hopelessness of the situation.

S: Is it possible to look at wanting as an expression of the ground?

V: It is the ground of something—it's more of a platform than the ground. [*Laughter*] It is *something* undoubtedly, but it's not the ground.

Student: Rinpoche, saying that sounds very cold; is there any warmth at all?

Vidyadhara: Well—

S: Well? [*Laughter*]

V: Unless you experience the coldness, you can't experience warmth, can you?

S: True.

V: By logic.

S: Then the fact that you're cold indicates that there is warmth.

V: Your ability to experience warmth is heightened by experiencing cold, or the coolness. As far as the ground of shunyata is concerned, there is no warmth. It is an unkind world, uncompassionate, ruthless. I think you have to give up hope, it's a hopeless situation. When we discuss the path, that is the starting point of warmth, which we will get into next time. That's true. It's cold, it's not very kind. [*Vidyadhara snaps fan.*]

S: I just wondered if this is a process, if you have to keep going beyond this point over and over again, or if you just go beyond?

V: I think you have to go through it over and over again.

S: You go as far as you've gone before and then you can do so automatically, over and over.

V: Yes. And once you begin, you cannot help taking some steps.

Student: When a person is having this experience, does he or she become really cold in his relationships? Would it be natural for a person having this experience to become cold in their relationships?

Vidyadhara: I wouldn't say so. That sounds like we are discussing the path. We are discussing the starting point.

S: Well, what would one's psychological state be?

V: One's psychological experience is that there is no room to maneuver about or to strategize anymore. It's a hard fact.

S: Sounds like a dank hole.

V: It is like a vajra. The vajra represents truth and shunyata at the same time. It is indestructible, a hard fact, indestructible fact. The sense should be harder than the words. It's the uncompassionate truth.

S: Then one would see one's environment as being uncompassionate also.

V: Well, the environment depends on you. It's your environment. There's no independent environment as such at all.

S: Well, this is true. But you come down to this coldness, which is internal, right?

V: Internal, yes, undoubtedly.

S: And yet the external situation remains. I mean there are people and communities and gurus and wives and the whole stuff. That doesn't go away. I mean there's still stuff to relate to and you're viewing it with this coldness inside.

V: Probably the communities and gurus will enforce that coldness. They might say to you that you have no hope. You're a hopeless case. "Much as I love you, I'm afraid you're a hopeless case." [*Laughter*] "Much as I'm your spiritual friend—" [*Laughter*]

Student: With all this talking about hopelessness and giving up your uniform and not being able to conduct another tour, I keep going back to the experience of death. Is that at all comparable to shunyata in the sense that there's an equilibrium between life and death in which life is death?

Vidyadhara: That seems to be the whole process.

S: One which all of us will go through collectively.

V: Yes. The only security of any kind, if there is security, is discontinuity. It is the only security there is. In other words, hopelessness is the security. Hopelessness is the ground. Continual hopelessness is the

ground; continual shunyata is the only ground. This could be said to be the hinayanist point of view of shunyata, but it is still valid at the beginning.

Student: If total awareness of shunyata exists, can there still be action?

Vidyadhara: Shunyata exists on reaction, comparison. Shunyata is emptiness. Therefore it constantly exists on, thrives on, existence as opposed to nonexistence. Shunyata is still experience. It is not an absolute state at all.

S: What kind of experience?

V: Shunyata is an experience.

S: But can one act out of that experience?

V: One cannot help it.

Student: Rinpoche, can you describe the inspiration to see what you see?

Vidyadhara: In what context?

S: Say in meditation, or just in general.

V: There's inspiration. At the same time, disappointment becomes inspiration. In that sense, that something is not seen is the beginning of seeing. For instance, if you are studying music, the starting point is to realize how unmusical you are. If you are studying art, the starting point is to realize how unartistic you are. That's a hopeful situation. That you have the intelligence to see how unartistic or how unmusical you are is the starting point. Hopelessness is the starting point. That is extremely powerful actually, and the most positive thought that you could have. It is an extraordinarily positive thing to discover how bad things are. [*Laughter*]

Student: Why do you say that this would be great? What if after you actually discover how bad you are, you start deciding that you're not so great? Isn't there a danger of developing paranoia, becoming more and more paranoid about yourself?

Vidyadhara: I think that's the starting point. You can't be intelligent unless you are paranoid. I mean [the Buddha's teachings] begin with the four noble truths rather than the attainment of enlightenment. The first thing the Buddha said was that there is nothing but suffering, which could be said to be a slightly paranoid remark to make. [*Laughter*] Proba-

bly we would prefer enlightenment. He didn't say that it is a beautiful world, he said the world consists of pain, misery, and suffering. That's a very intelligent remark to make, extremely positive.

S: The first thing the Buddha said was, "Wonder of wonders, all beings are intended to be buddhas." If one had that experience, would one maintain faith in that?

V: I think so, yes.

S: So it's not totally hopeless.

V: But we have to be careful not to make a double twist.

S: Let's just take it as it is.

V: Yes, but let's not interpret.

S: Yeah, but nonetheless, even if the ground is gone [*Gong is rung*]—I am what I am and nothing can change that, right? That seems to be a basically stable—

V: No, I wouldn't say that, I would say the opposite: I am *not* what I am, and for that reason it can happen. [*Laughter*]

S: I can't be anything else.

V: Hmm?

S: I can't be anything other than I am.

V: You can. You could go through the impermanence of what you are.

S: Let's go back to the "Battle of Ego" seminar [*laughter*] where you described the basic ground that ego is built on as stable.

V: Somewhat.

S: In its stability is an all-righteous, is there not?

V: I think you are stretching too much. Elastic band.

S: It's a desperate situation. [*Laughter*]

V: I sympathize with you on that. [*Laughter*]

S: Considering the power of saying how bad things are, what kind of power could it be to use human good as an index?

V: How about goodness, do you mean?

S: In other words, you spoke of the power of feeling bad—not feeling bad but realizing how bad things are. Where is the index, which I often use, of feeling good? In other words, going in the direction that feels good, let's say, and using that as an index.

V: Well, to begin with, can you tell me what your idea of good is? A definition, so to speak?

S: It's when I feel loose and relaxed and not confused and clear.

V: Not confused and clear. That's reasonable. [*Laughter*] That's rea-

sonable! But that's the whole starting point, you see. If you see how bad you are, you are not confused. You see *precisely* how bad you are! [*Laughter*]

S: I don't feel good.

V: Somewhat. [*Laughter*] You feel definitely, anyway.

Student: Did you say that the advantage of hopelessness is to accelerate the receptivity? If I have nothing to hold on to, including hope, that might make me more receptive to what is going to happen. No attachment.

Vidyadhara: Can you restate that?

S: Yes. If I have a hope, that will blind me to what's happening around me.

V: Yes.

S: If I have no hope, that means I can react intuitively and completely to whatever happens.

V: Well, to reach the low point of hopelessness, you have to have hope and then it becomes hopelessness, rather than that you are completely wiped out at the beginning.

S: It's not a negative statement, the way I see it.

V: Well, you have to have a positive thing, to be hopeful, to begin with. Then you lose your hope. It's a question of nothingness and blankness—you see what I mean?

S: No.

V: Hope is based on hopelessness; hopelessness depends on hope. To begin with you have a drive to be hopeful, you struggle all the time. Then you lose that hope, you begin to come to the conclusion of hopelessness. Whereas if there is no hope at all in the beginning, there's no fertile ground.

S: So that's a condition?

V: Somewhat, yes. It's an interaction of some kind. If you say you have one eye, that automatically presumes that usually people have two eyes and you happen to have one eye. It is a logical process.

S: Or you have *at least* one eye—you may have another one I don't know about.

V: And so forth.

Student: What's the difference between the hopelessness that people may feel before shunyata and the hopelessness that they feel after? There are a lot of people who feel very hopeless about their situation.

Vidyadhara: We could say that the hopelessness of their situation before shunyata, as you call it, is shunyata experience already. There is room to work with because we feel hopeless. That is shunyata experience already. It is giving up that and this. You are completely lost, you don't know how to fight or how to grasp. You feel completely hopeless, hopeless. That seems to be the starting point of shunyata experience. We could say that *is* shunyata experience, in fact.

S: What happens after that?

V: We experience the hopelessness of it and then we begin to experience warmth in that negativity. We are going to discuss that later on.

S: Is it that you start meditation with the hope that you are going to get somewhere or do something for yourself, and you realize on the way that there is no such thing. Is that the hopelessness?

V: Realizing that meditation is not going to save you, but you have to work on yourself. That is the idea of hopelessness.

Student: How do you work on yourself other than by meditation?

Vidyadhara: Nothing.

S: Nothing.

S: [*Another student chimes in.*] Nothing.

V: That encompasses a lot of areas: meditation and meditation in action. But without that there is no other way.

Student: Rinpoche, when you see the hopelessness and futility of the whole spiritual trip and of meditation, if you keep meditating anyway, wouldn't that indicate that you still have hope? I mean there's nothing out there, you know, it's futile, so why do it? If you see how futile it is and then you continue to do it, it's like beating your head against the wall.

Vidyadhara: In this case you appreciate doing nothing but just being, which is the epitome of hopelessness. [Laughter] That brings compassion and enlightenment.

Student: I think I read it or you said it, but what we call meditation in the beginning isn't really meditation, it's just playing. After this hopelessness, we really start something with our meditation.

Vidyadhara: Yes. The whole idea of the mechanistic approach is "Before I do that, I'm going to get there." You have to give up that approach as well.

Student: If the hopelessness comes out in the body, as a feeling of wanting to throw up and terrible anxiety and your stomach going wild and you feel like you might lose your mind—if the hopelessness comes out in that way, is that because we are doing something wrong, that we are taking the wrong approach?

Vidyadhara: Psychologically struggling too much.

Student: Sometimes I feel the way he just described, maybe differently day by day, going too fast or feeling close to a certain kind of pain. And it'll come time to meditate or I will be in my bed meditating and I'll notice that after I meditate for an hour I feel better. Out of that experience I can't help having some feeling about meditation, or attitude toward it, that it is salvation, or that it is at least a momentary release of something. Is that a good way to think about meditation or to connect those two? I don't know if I'm making that up or anything.

Vidyadhara: Well, in a primitive practice you might use meditation as a temporary service, temporary salvation, but in the absolute sense that doesn't apply anymore. Meditation means giving up hope altogether. You just sit and do it.

S: I don't enter it with the hope that I'll be released from some hang-up I've been feeling, but it just so happens that I feel a lot better in terms of tiring and confusion and feeling my body much looser.

V: I think that is a misunderstanding. In terms of feeling that certain ways of doing things might help you, there's still a sense of therapeutic practice. Meditation is not therapeutic practice at all. We seem to have a problem in this country with the sense that meditation is included with psychotherapy or physiotherapy or whatever. A lot of Buddhists feel proud because meditation is accepted as part of the therapeutic system, a landmark of the Western world. But I think that pride is simpleminded pride. Buddhism should transcend the therapeutic practice of meditation. Relating with gurus is quite different from going to your psychiatrist.

S: But out of that experience I'm afraid of falling into the trap of getting too involved in the therapeutic aspect, because it does in fact dissolve pain. I mean, that is an experience that I have.

V: You shouldn't dissolve pain.

S: You shouldn't?

V: You should raise pain! [*Laughter*] Otherwise you don't know who you are or what you are. Meditation is a way of opening. In that particu-

lar process, under-hidden subconscious things come up, so you can view yourself as who you are. It is an unpeeling, unmasking process.

S: How is that related to freedom?

V: Because there is a sense not of collecting but of an undoing process. You don't collect further substances that bind you or further responsibilities. It is a freedom process.

Student: There's a tendency for people to come forth with a specific psychological problem and to have somebody say, "Well, why don't you meditate?" But from the point of view you just expressed, that would be inappropriate and of no particular help.

Vidyadhara: It depends on how you meditate. It depends on your attitude to meditation.

S: For example, a meditation like Zen meditation or meditation as you've been describing it today has this quality of hopelessness. That seemed to teach me that it wouldn't be appropriate to tell somebody to do it in order to try to help them with their problem.

V: I think it would. To help with their problem is to bring the problem onto the surface.

S: Isn't that the same as therapy?

V: I don't think so. We don't talk about curing.

S: Therapy does make things surface.

V: No, it doesn't, actually. It is reputed to do so, but somehow you become a professional confesser so you know what language to use. In meditation there is no language involved at all. The whole practice is not involved with language, but just doing it.

S: But you do talk to yourself in meditation.

V: So what?

S: So it uses a language.

V: You don't try to get involved with proving yourself to somebody else, which is a much heavier trip. Moreover you don't pay yourself a salary or fees. [*Laughter*]

Student: Does feeling pain have anything to do with feeling uncomfortable?

Vidyadhara: Comfortable is pain, yeah.

S: Comfortable is pain?

V: Comfort brings pain.

S: Comfort brings pain?

V: Mm hm.

S: Well, when you feel uncomfortable—

V: —that brings pleasure. [*Laughter*]

S: Sounds like masochists.

V: I wouldn't say that either; then you defeat your purpose.

S: Masochists find pleasure from pain, same thing.

V: I don't think so.

S: You mean they are different?

V: Because you are relating with what you are, premasochists.

Student: Does this hopelessness rise out of seeing that you have never been able to establish anything in your mind or keep it there?

Vidyadhara: Hopelessness seems to come up because you can't cheat yourself anymore. You can't con yourself anymore. You can't con the situation, and you can't cheat anybody in that given situation anymore. Therefore you feel helpless and hopeless.

S: You are not consciously attempting to con somebody or other.

V: No. Psychologically, it's built in already. There's a tendency to provide as much personal comfort as possible.

Student: What is your feeling about the original Sufi system, in the thirteenth century?

Vidyadhara: What system?

S: The Sufi mystical system of whirling dervishes, in which they use a process called *sama'* incorporating dance, music, and singing. They approach this tremendous despair and hopelessness and then gain some sort of enlightenment and become illuminated. What do you think about that?

V: Is that so? [*Laughter*]

S: I don't know. I'm just wondering if that kind of system might develop here in the Western world. It reduces your ego presumably, but it's accompanied by music and dancing.

V: It doesn't have to be the Sufi system, particularly.

S: Yeah, I know, that's what I mean.

V: They provide their own means once they are awakened, once they are opened. If you are trying to court certain practices of such a tradition, it is not particularly helpful. People could develop, and seemingly

they are already developing, a way of communicating with themselves which leads to ways of loosening up. They provide all kinds of ways of loosening them up. It is already happening. So one doesn't have to produce or to present certain set patterns of how to loosen up—it seems to happen automatically.

Student: Isn't one of the problems that one can invite hopelessness in order to find hope. Such hopelessness is really hopeful.

Vidyadhara: Well, that tends to happen automatically.

S: But if one knows this in advance?

V: I don't think so. You might know it intellectually, but when you actually experience hopelessness, it's quite different. We could talk about hunger in theory, but when we are actually hungry ourselves, it's quite different.

Student: Is this hopelessness experienced as an emotional state?

Vidyadhara: It is an emotional state, yes, definitely.

S: Then what is the place of upaya?

V: To watch the hopelessness. Quite simple.

S: But it seems as if something more active is involved, at least in the way we were discussing it. The mind is doing something more active than merely watching.

V: Mind is acknowledging its hopelessness. And mind has to give up its trips. It happens naturally.

S: How is this arrived at? Is it arrived at by an active process of the mind?

V: No, it is arrived at by the actual process of the situation, seeing the hopelessness of the situation.

Student: Is the hopelessness a projection? Is it some type of ground that is not empty yet?

Vidyadhara: That's right, yes.

Student: When you reach this point of hopelessness you don't have to sit and meditate anymore. Do you see this process really without concept?

Vidyadhara: You see, the whole process does not look like the mechanistic approach of what we should do after that, but it evolves out of the

whole situation. And maybe you will find yourself meditating *more* after that process.

Student: Does the path toward the experience of hopelessness necessarily include pain and despair?

Vidyadhara: Definitely, yes. Because you have no ground to stand on.

S: Does that mean we should actively seek out and attract these situations? [*Laughter*]

V: Not necessarily. That's generally what we are doing, actually. [*Laughter*] We seek out our permanent answer, nest, home. That in itself is heading toward hopelessness. That happens spontaneously.

Student: What positive thing can possibly come out of a truly hopeless situation such as the tragedy in Bangladesh, a place where people are actually starving, not just in their minds? I mean, they are not simply deprived of comforts that we take for granted; they are deprived of even having a meal. What positive thing can arise out of that for anyone who's involved in it?

Vidyadhara: I suppose you could say that it is beginning to realize that there's no ground, no psychological ground to stand on.

S: I can realize it, but do you think that those people can? As they are starving to death, do you think they realize that there's really no ground to stand on?

V: Much more so! It is physically obvious that you have no roof over your head.

S: But perhaps the despair leads right to death, so there's no beginning of hope at all.

S: Did you not say that mind watches the hopelessness?

V: Yes.

S: And doesn't that need some kind of training, say through meditation?

V: At this point it does not seem to be dependent on any particular training.

S: So the people in Bangladesh perhaps do not have the necessary training to realize their hopelessness.

V: No, but they begin to realize their solid idea of enemies and friends does not exist. The whole thing is purely a survival process, which is a

very lucid situation. If an enemy comes and gives you food, you accept it gladly—as well as friends.

S: It destroys ideas.

V: There's no idea of politics at that level.

Student: In actual fact, the process of experiencing this seems pretty complicated, though. One part of it is a growing sense of hopelessness and of the ground emptying out. But as you come up from there, the sun is very hot, babies are terrific, love is great from time to time, and work is good a lot. There is this counterpull. How does that not get broken? Or does this just deepen into an actual crisis in time? How to think about that?

Vidyadhara: I think the suggestion becomes deeper. Once you begin to realize that you can't control your physical situation, you begin to give up hope of strategizing. And the whole thing becomes a much more living process.

S: In this process, in regard to the bhumis of the last seminar, this seems to be "pre" any of them, is that right?

V: It is the first path, the path of accumulation.

We might have to stop at that point, friends, and have further discussion at the end of the next talk. Thank you.

Talk Three

PATH

HAVING DISCUSSED the nonexistence of the basic ground already, we will discuss the nonexistence of the path. The basic principle of shunyata at this point, as far as the path is concerned, is a process in which the style of the path does not become a solid thing anymore. According to the shunyata principle, the style of the path is that it is an unconditioned path. It allows basic openness as well as basic confusion. Because of that particular nature, openness also could be regarded as confusion on the path.

Because of confusion on the path, because the whole path is confused, bewildered, one has to learn to relate with something. The way to relate with the path is by trying to relate with something that is there, which is the idea of compassion. The definition of compassion, or karuna, is basic warmth, the absence of duality, absence of comparison, clear and uncompassionate space. Because of that uncompassionate space, there is something basically healthy about that, solid about that. That is compassion. Something is actually happening, which is the idea of compassion.

The idea of compassion in this case is being basically open, willing to relate with what's happening in this given situation as it is. You don't expect reassurance and you don't expect threat. Once you are on the path it is definitely a solid thing already, and because of that there is warmth. You are finally willing to make a commitment to unknown territory. Unknown territory becomes known territory from that point of view, because it is unknown. You are taking a chance, you are willing to

take a chance. That is the idea of compassion, being willing to take a chance as things develop in their own basic nature. You are willing to communicate. You are willing to take a chance.

Compassion is not being kind and loving necessarily; it is more openness. You are willing to relate with the whole process. Generally the experience of compassion is that somebody is rich and willing to give something away because of their charity. It is the idea of being charitable. You are healthy and you are going to save somebody else from an unhealthy situation. You know much more than other people do, you have more information, so you are trying to save those people from trouble. That is idiot compassion. Such compassion is based on levels: something is better than that, therefore I have the complete opportunity to do it.

The same thing could apply to dharma: somebody doesn't know about studying dharma and I do understand the dharma. Therefore I tell somebody about the dharma and I figure I'm saving them from their confusion and ignorance. Or I have lots of money and those people don't. Still they are good people, worth giving that money to, and because of their condition I give them money. That particular process of compassion is idiot compassion, as we mentioned. People who receive compassionate gestures from such one-sided compassionate persons should help them again in reverse because *they* are confused. They are distorted because their belief in one-sidedness is too strong, too overwhelming.

The idea of compassion in this case, on the path, is that you feel or see the situation directly, fundamentally, fully. Because of that you could help others. It is not that you want to see them be happy, good, or healthy, but that people need help in the sense of realizing healthiness within themselves. They are already healthy people, they are already wealthy people. The basic idea of compassion from that point of view is an open situation, which is based on the shunyata principle, not on comparison.

Once you begin to see the hopelessness of the whole thing, you give up any kind of expectations. Because you give up expectations, you become more generous. Therefore you are willing to relate with what is there without your expectations. And because of that nonexpectation, you are more equipped when you are relating with other situations. That is the path of compassion.

We could say that the path of shunyata consists of compassion and wisdom, or knowledge. The knowledge that things need to be done according to what things are, as well as things are so because you can't escape from that particular situation. That things are as they are is knowledge. That things are so in a given situation is skillful means, that we are going to work with that situation without any hesitation. So the path of compassion and shunyata consists of the union of compassion and knowledge, karuna and prajna. Because you see things as they are, you act accordingly, in accord with the given situation. Those two situations become prominent in terms of the path of compassion.

We could have a discussion.

Student: In the state of hopelessness, one has compassion, one reaches the state of the true path of compassion?

Vidyadhara: Yes, precisely. Because you feel hopeless, therefore you feel compassion—because you don't feel better than anybody else. You are completely in contact with things as they are.

Student: Where does skillful means enter into compassion?

Vidyadhara: If you are fully compassionate, you can't miss the point. If you don't miss the point, then you act accordingly. That is skillful means. Very simple.

Student: If you become open and act compassionately, is that because by being open you experience the situation of the person who is before you in the same way as you experience yourself?

Vidyadhara: Not necessarily. There could be a person who is quite different, compared to your nature, but at the same time you see their basic qualities.

S: When you're at the beginning stage, obviously you can't be right on the point, since you are only beginning. So your openness and compassion, your actions, will be off the point slightly. Does that mean you should go back and meditate some more, or just keep on and take the risk of irritation or tension in the space? Should you allow yourself to go into it, with the risk that you might not be on or get on the point? In other words, I guess that space is a lot like a mirror and will tell you whether you are not doing it right. Then you go back and meditate, I suppose. Or is it the kind of thing where you just sort of stumble along

for a while and your actions sort of get on the point at the various stages of the path?

V: The idea of compassion in this case is straightforward. You can't strategize, you can't steer around. Therefore I suppose what you say is true, that you just have to accept the given situation. You just have to get into it. Mistakes become part of the creative process automatically.

Student: You mentioned "basic qualities" in the other person. Is that seeing the ground of the other person as being your own ground, that basic quality you see in the other person? What is that basic quality?

Vidyadhara: It is a mutual understanding in terms of projection and projector. That you don't see a distinction between what ought to be, or what should be, and what things are, as it is. That other person or other situation is unmistakable; it is so. It is like the sun shines tomorrow, maybe overcast, and sets tomorrow as well. One can't argue about that. That's the basic quality. The situation shows that as it is; you can't argue about that.

S: In other words, if we were free we would see that basic quality, if we were free in ourselves to see it.

V: If you are not free, you are going to be shaken by it. You are going to be awakened by it, reminded by it.

Student: Do you think compassion is projection as well?

Vidyadhara: Both, theater and projector.

S: But that is something that is really not looking outward, there's no space––

V: That's right, yeah.

Student: You talked about how compassion arises out of hopelessness. That has a very somber kind of feel to it. Somehow the whole seminar has a very somber feel to it, at least for me; whereas in the "Bodhisattva Path" seminar [March 1972 at Karmê-Chöling] you talked about compassion as arising out of generosity, in the sense of one's own richness and that the first stage of the bodhisattva path is called the joyful one. I'm a little confused as to why in that case it comes off sounding positive and in this case it comes off sounding so somber.

Vidyadhara: Well, if we are discussing the five paths, what we are discussing in this case is the first path, the layman's path, before you come

to the bodhisattva's path. It is the path of accumulation. In terms of the path of accumulation, you must be concerned with the ten virtuous actions. There are three of the body (bodily skillful ways of dealing with situations), four of speech, and three of mind. So the whole process is a skillful one at this point.

When a layman begins on the path, he or she should relate with the path as choicelessness. There is no choice once you commit to the path. Laymen usually begin on the path by taking refuge. "I am part of the dharma. I take refuge in the dharma and the Buddha and the sangha. I have no choice." Because of its choicelessness, you have already escaped. Because you have already escaped, therefore the path presented to you is obvious. There is no way out, no way of giving in to dependencies of any kind at all. So it seems that we are discussing different levels.

S: Because of that, would you say it is important to have a rather clear idea of the levels on the path, without getting hung up on it, because of the confusion it will engender if you mistake the highlights of one level for something else on a different level? Or is that something that would happen anyway?

V: There are no levels. That is an important point. Absolutely no levels. That's what confuses us always. When spiritual teachings are presented to people, there are so many levels presented to you—etheric body, spiritual body, physical body, whatever. Those levels are nonsense, they don't happen that way.

S: No, by levels I meant the bhumis and the two—

V: They are not regarded as levels, they are regarded as steppingstones, a staircase.

S: That's what I meant.

V: I mean the bhumis are not really levels. They are staircases, so to speak. They are not regarded as levels as such. What we are discussing is body and mind, physical and mental, both situations. As far as the physical mind/body, psychophysical body, is concerned, there are no levels. It is a cooperating situation.

S: I'm not quite sure. Should you have a fair idea of the steps?

V: It's not particularly should you or shouldn't you, but it happens.

S: Mm-hmm.

V: For instance, should you be one or two years old? That is a matter of whether you *are* one year old or two years old. You are going to be

for a while and your actions sort of get on the point at the various stages of the path?

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V: It's not particularly should you or shouldn't you, but it happens.

S: Mm-hmm.

V: For instance, should you be one or two years old? That is a matter of whether you *are* one year old or two years old. You are going to be

two years or three years old and you are going to your own birthdays in any case. You can't escape that. It's not planned.

Student: Just before my question, someone had asked something about generosity, confusing that level with the layman's level. That kind of thing could create certain confusions in whatever you are doing, perhaps.

Vidyadhara: I don't think so.

S: You don't think it would?

V: I don't think so at all. It has been said that laymen should not act like bodhisattvas and bodhisattvas should not act like yogins. Yogins should not act as buddhas. Buddhas should not act as herukas. It's quite definite.

S: Yeah, but do you have to know where the buddha is that you're not, that you shouldn't act as?

V: That doesn't apply, that's just a formula.

S: Just a formula?

V: It doesn't apply anymore—whether you are a yogin or yogini, whether you are a bodhisattva, you can't act like that. You'll be caught.

Student: Are the refuges also supposed to be taken with hopelessness?

Vidyadhara: Definitely! [*Laughter*] That is a very good question, actually. You have no other alternatives, you give up hopes and sidetracks of any kind. Therefore you take refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha. You are finally giving in to the main road, you give up sidetracks. It is a final gesture of hopelessness. That's why it is called taking refuge. You have no other resources. It is an extremely healthy thing to do and very sensible.

Generosity begins at the level when you give up hope. There is no other choice. Because there is no other choice, therefore you become more generous. You are willing to admit whatever. At that point, one also begins to realize that ego has no other choice but to give itself up. Discovering this is a further spiritual adventure involved in generosity.

Student: I was wondering about attachment to compassion and if compassion is the product of greed. You said that the bodhisattva was attached to compassion—how is that possible?

Vidyadhara: Better make something up. [*Laughter*]

S: One time you said that you agreed that a bodhisattva does have an

attachment to compassion and it seems to fit this basic description in any case. That's why he or she is not a buddha. But if compassion is not a projection, how is it possible to be attached to it? You can only be attached to a projection.

V: It is a projection; compassion is a projection. In many cases, it starts at the bodhisattva level of the different bhumis because of your objective of generosity, discipline, patience, energy, meditation, and prajna. Your object is to be related with all that. That is why they are called different levels, or bhumis. The bodhisattva path has levels to communicate, levels to be related with. It is levels automatically.

S: In this case then, is it an attachment to something that is both a projection and not a projection?

V: Whether it is a projection or not, bodhisattvas are concerned with their work. It is a question of their duty rather than convention or having to relate with their credentials. They just become serious, honest workers. That's what bodhisattvas are.

S: Then why aren't they buddhas?

V: Buddhas do not experience hopelessness. [*Laughter*] You might say they are *being,* they are not workers. The sun is not regarded as a worker. Although you could say that it fulfills the fertility of the earth, you can't say that the sun is working hard to fulfill the ground, to grow plants and produce light and things. That's why there is the analogy of one moon in thirteen hundred bowls of water. Buddhas don't work hard, they are just *being.* And by being, they work hard automatically. Their work fulfills for them.

Student: In one of the sutras the Buddha said that for beings there is rest, but for me there is no rest. I forgot the sutra, but he said, "As for me there is no rest."

Vidyadhara: Precisely! The sun has no rest either.

S: It's not working either.

V: Not working. Being the sun is working hard—at the same time, it is resting.

Student: And the bodhisattva is just a guy with—

Vidyadhara: A certain intention or direction is involved. It's more like a torch than the sun, as far as a bodhisattva is concerned. A torch has to survive on oil, but the buddha's standard does not need oil.

S: What is the oil, then?

V: For bodhisattvas? The energy is prajna, and shunyata is the oil. Shunyata is the oil on which they survive, and the flame is upaya, skillful means. So they work with the combination of shunyata and upaya.

Student: But the historical Buddha was not buddha, because the historical Buddha was working—forty-nine years.

Vidyadhara: Well, he wasn't buddha until the end of his life; until he was twenty-nine he wasn't a buddha, he was a bodhisattva. But the historical Buddha was never buddha, because he was the historical one. [*Laughter*] If you say that, we will be regarded as renegades. But it is so.

Student: At first we were talking about ground, which is everywhere. When we talk about path, it seems to set up a kind of narrowness or possibility of going off the path. And then there is the question of discipline. Is the analogy of the path kind of like computing, because either you are on it or off it? But if both are shunyata?

Vidyadhara: Well, when we talk about the shunyata path, in the beginning, we had a solid path, a narrow path, giving up hope and fear both. It is extremely austere, really. You have no way of venturing about at all; it is very austere. You only have one step to work with, which is without hope, without fear, just straight on the true path, absolute path. Beyond that, the path becomes an open path. It depends on how open you are. It is not a question of the nature of the path, but it is a question of how open you are. Depending on how open you are, that much freedom there is.

Student: Rinpoche, I don't understand projection. Did you say that compassion is a projection?

Vidyadhara: Compassion is a *conditioned* projection. And projections are what exists between the chaos of that and this. In other words, we could say that projections are the chaos, and compassion is the intermediary between projection and projector.

S: You don't mean projection in the sense that psychology uses projection, as a fantasy, something you made up. You don't mean it like that?

V: Your enemy or your lover is a projection in this case.

S: Mm-hmm. Oh, I see.

Student: Would the bodhisattva be in communication with emotions then?

Vidyadhara: What else? That is his path? That's the only path, that the bodhisattva can exist with his emotions.

S: How do you go about communicating with those noncommunicative things?

V: It has nothing to do with that, not communicating with the situation at all. Anything that exists beyond radiation communicates with the situation.

S: It seems they are pretty one-way. I mean, my emotions seem to be communicating with me, but I am not clear enough on whatever I've got to say to them.

V: Oy vey.

S: Yeah. I can be angry now or embarrassed now, but the emotion is coming toward me; whereas any communication coming to them is not—

V: I don't know what you are talking about, what you are asking.

S: Is the path out of hopelessness?

V: It is *within* hopelessness.

S: Why not just remain in the so-called hopelessness which is what *is*, completely true?

V: When you lose hope, you lose hope. Then true hope begins to arise, when you begin to realize hopelessness. It's the same thing when you begin to give up the clouds which cover the sun, which is the hopelessness of the sun. When there are no clouds, the hopelessness is gone—the sun is right there! I shouldn't have said that. [*Laughter*] Too much love and light. [*Laughter*] However—that is what we teach.

Student: In the early stages of the path, when you're communicating, would there be a greater tendency for the communication to be energetic in the sense of surprise?

Vidyadhara: I think so, yes. There are constant surprises all the time, that you didn't believe it but it is so. What you thought turns out to be [inaudible]. All kinds of things go on outrageously. The confusion before the realization is regarded as the realization before the confusion. All kinds of confusion take place, which is realization and so forth.

We should stop at that point. I would like to have a good discussion, maybe tomorrow. The whole idea of the shunyata seminar is not to

present further stuff so that you get more confused, but to find some way out of confusion because confusion does exist. So it would be good if you had a really solid, good discussion tomorrow. That would be good. And quite possibly we might have a discussion period before the talk, and then have the talk, and then have further discussion afterward. That would be good.

I feel personally responsible. Talking about shunyata is a very heavy subject. I might do a disservice to the audience by getting bogged down in the confusion of shunyata. And on the whole, this particular seminar does not provide promises of any kind of enlightenment—no promises, none whatsoever. You could say that it promises more confusion. However, that confusion could be intelligent confusion as opposed to confused confusion. [*Laughter*]

Talk Four

Fruition

HAVING DISCUSSED the path of shunyata, the path itself becomes the goal in some sense. But at the same time, we realize that the goal is not a place one finds permanency or permanent security to dwell on or dwell in. The concept of shunyata is ceaseless space, like the analogy of outer space which never ends. In some sense, the shunyata principle could be called a goal: in the sense of going from imperfection to perfection, it could be called a goal. But it is not really a definite goal in the sense of achievement or a peak experience in which the student stops. In other words, the all-pervading quality of shunyata provides tremendous room to expand constantly. From that point of view, achievement is the beginning point of another odyssey. The energy of compassion and of prajna, or knowledge, constantly goes on. But metaphorically, if we discuss the idea of a goal, then that goal is twofold kaya: the kaya of form and the kaya of formlessness. *Kaya* is a Sanskrit word meaning "form," "body." Twofold kaya comes from the experience of transcending the twofold barriers of ego: conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality.

You might call conflicting emotions anti-shunyata, because they do not allow or experience any space or lubrication to develop things. They are solid and definite. It is like the analogy of the pig in the symbol of ignorance which just follows its nose and never sees directions of any kind at all. It just keeps following, constantly guided by impulse. And whatever comes in front of its nose, it just consumes it and looks for the next one. That is conflicted emotions. In this case we are talking about

emotions as primitive emotions. Take the example of anger, for instance. There is the primitive, conflicted quality of anger and there is also the energetic quality of the anger, which is quite different. Conflicting emotions are those that are purely trying to secure ego's aim and object, trying to fulfill ego's demand. They are based on constantly looking for security, maintaining the identity of "I am." Conflicting emotions also contain energy, which is the compassionate nature, the basic warmth and basic creative process. But somehow in that situation of primitive emotions, there is very little generosity of letting energy function by itself.

Conflicting emotions try to hold on to emotions as obligatory emotions that should maintain some function, maintain ego. Of course there is constant conflict with that particular style. Such a one-sided point of view brings discomfort, dissatisfaction, frustration, and so forth. The operating style of conflicting emotions is that narrow-minded point of view. In some sense we could say it is a one-track-mind style. There is concern that there is a particular thing to fulfill, so the emotion goes directly to that peak point and never considers the situations around it. That is why we speak of conflicting emotions, or primitive emotions, as opposed to compassionate emotions.

We could say the compassionate aspect of emotions is quite different. It has more space and it has panoramic qualities. At the same time, the compassionate aspect of emotions still has a sense of duality, we might say, because compassion also contains prajna, or knowledge. In order to have a perception or knowledge, you have to have dualistic awareness, dualistic consciousness. But that is not particularly dualistic *fixation*, as in the primitive emotions. [Simply] seeing two situations is not regarded as dualistic fixation in the pejorative sense. But seeing two in terms of goal orientation or security orientation is primitive; there is no element of openness at all.

So the quality of primitive emotional conflict, conflicting emotions, is like color or paint. Primitive emotion is definite and solid—it can't be interpreted, can't be changed. Whether it is just blue, just green, or just yellow, it has to be a definite thing. [Primitive] emotions have different expectations to fulfill their desire, fulfill their function. But in order to be fulfilled, strangely enough, their particular color or paint has to have some medium, oil or water. And that oil or water is the sophisticated emotions of compassion, or the liberated emotions, whatever you would like to call them. In other words, the primitive quality of the emotions

goes along with the advanced emotions of compassion or understanding. That is the only point where the conflicting emotions could be transformed into something else, for the very reason that conflicting emotions are dependent on that medium.

And quite possibly, the more concentrated the medium, the weaker the intensity of the colors. They would be just faint colors of blue, faint colors of yellow, in which the other colors could be introduced because basically that color is not a particularly solid color. The whole thing is that much more accommodating. So from that point of view conflicting emotions contain the weakness of maintaining their conflicted emotionness. They have the potential of changing and developing into something else. And the medium in which the color is carried could be said to be the shunyata experience. That is the fundamental lubrication in which emotions could be developed into a different style, could be made more transparent.

The other aspect, the second veil or bondage of ego, is primitive belief about reality. Primitive belief about reality is, again, not necessarily based on emotions as such, but on conflict. It is based on subconscious emotions rather than conscious emotions, that undercurrent which inclines toward goals, toward achieving, toward directions, toward security. It is more of a tendency rather than living emotions, as solid and powerful as the conflicting emotions were. But it also needs some lubrication in order to function. In other words, without oxygen we cannot breathe, we cannot function. So there is a basic environment or climate in which primitive belief about reality functions. The reason it is primitive is because it is dependent on something else; it is not a self-sufficient concept or idea.

Of the two veils of ego, conflicting emotions could be said to be that of psychological materialism, the literalness of it. The other veil, primitive belief about reality, is spiritual materialism. In some sense, it is highly sophisticated, but there is still belief in being saved or being helped. There is permanent promise. The achievement or attainment of enlightenment is regarded as one permanent situation in which you can function, you can relax. You can live in it, make a home of it too. And also, because it contains philosophical speculation in terms of a way to exist, there is a sense of survival. We are trying to survive, therefore we are searching for spiritual practice. But that spiritual practice is to attain immortality. The reason we search for a spiritual path is that we feel that

we might not survive, might not be able to exist as an independent entity and being. So we have two kinds of misunderstandings. We have the childlike primitive mind, that you just want to get what you want, and if you don't get what you want you get frustrated. And we have the other one, that you think you could strategize the whole thing and then you will get what you want. Two types of struggle or bondage.

Those two types of bondage are related to the two-kaya principle, the two bodies or forms of buddha that we were talking about in terms of the goal of shunyata, the achievement of shunyata, metaphorically speaking. The body of form transcends conflicting emotions, and the body of formlessness transcends primitive belief about reality. The body of formlessness is the dharmakaya, and the body of form is the nirmanakaya and sambhogakaya. The body of form is based on a direct relationship with reality [nirmanakaya] and a direct relationship with energy [sambhogakaya], which is an earthy situation. Both are earthy situations. In other words, we could say that there is visual perception and there is audial perception. The visual perceptions could be said to be the nirmanakaya of the solid textures of life, and the audial perceptions to be the sambhogakaya of energy, vibrations, speech, and so on. And none of these final stages of buddha, the experience of buddhahood, can exist without the background of shunyata. You cannot perceive form and you cannot attain enlightenment unless you are able to see that form also contains space. And you cannot attain an ultimate understanding of energy or vibration or musical sound unless you begin to see that music also contains silence. Energy contains action as well as nonaction, both are energy levels. Otherwise there is a tendency to become self-destructive.

So in this case, the state of form in the final experience of shunyata is that of basic existence in which there is no distortion of any kind whatsoever. It is not influenced by primitive emotions or primitive belief. Everything is seen clearly, precisely, right to the point. Form is seen as form because we also see the formlessness of it. It is based on the form as well as the emptiness around the form. And sound is heard, energy is felt, because sound contains silence as well, and energy contains nonaction as well.

So shunyata in this case is panoramic vision in which things could be accommodated. At the same time, the accommodation itself becomes a perception of its own. In other words, the container and what is con-

tained become one. They complement each other. Therefore there is no question about maintaining the container in order to contain what is contained. In terms of the dharmakaya principle, the formlessness of the second kaya, it is a state of complete openness because dharmakaya or formlessness is not dependent on any relative proof. It is completely free of comparison. For the very fact that it could exist by itself, therefore, this level of understanding of the shunyata principle is almost more at the level of what is called *jnana,* which means "wisdom."

The difference between jnana, or wisdom, and prajna, or knowledge, is that in the case of knowledge you still need relationship. It is still *experience* as far as the popular idea of shunyata is concerned. There is still play, interchange, interaction, at the level of form and energy. In the case of dharmakaya, there is no relationship, there is no interaction or interchange. But it seems to be rather difficult explaining that particular state, because in fact we cannot say that there is *not* interchange, there is *not* relationship. But quite much more to the point is that interchange or relationship is not valid anymore. It is already related, it is already interchanged. Therefore the question of being in that state of dharmakaya shunyata experience is futile. We can't say that we have achieved dharmakaya or that we have achieved that particular state of wisdom, or jnana, at all. In other words, we could say that jnana cannot be achieved. Jnana consumes one, rather than one relating to jnana.

So the last part of shunyata's achievement is the experience of ultimate non-ego. You could have the experience of ego to begin with as a hang-up, problematic, irritating. Then you have the transcending of that ego and you feel the absence of ego, the nondualistic qualities of ego; you feel a sense of emptiness, a sense of absence. In the end, at the dharmakaya level, even the absence of ego is not felt, because the whole thing is not seen as an attainment in any way at all. It is not regarded as attainment or nonattainment. In other words, the ultimate understanding of shunyata—or the attainment of shunyatahood, so to speak—is impossible from that point of view. If there are any possibilities, that in itself is self-defeating. "Impossible" in this sense does not necessarily mean that you can't have it, you can't get to it. But the question of getting it does not apply anymore. The question of having it does not apply anymore. It is the complete destruction of ego, completely dissolving the state of ego. So we cannot celebrate that we have attained enlightenment because there is no one to take part in the celebration.

We could have a discussion.

Student: Is there anything positive you can say about ego? Is there anything beneficial about ego? Do you know what I mean?

Vidyadhara: Well, I suppose the spiritual search altogether is due to ego. Without ego, we wouldn't be studying. So ego is the instigator of the whole thing.

Student: I have some difficulty with the idea of containment—for instance, that sound contains silence. I can understand that sound *implies* silence, that form *implies* space, or maybe sound *arose out of* silence, but the idea that sound *contains* silence is something I don't grasp.

Vidyadhara: You see, that is basically the point of view in which you don't regard yourself as the listener to the sound. The sound or music plays by itself and does not have a player or a listener. Then sound is contained by itself. It's a question of mostly using the language of evaluation, that there is an audience to judge it. So you hear the sound according to the audience, rather than the sound being heard by itself. [*Snaps fan*]

S: Would the formulation that sound *implies* silence and silence *implies* sound be consistent with that?

V: That's right, yes. They are complementary to one another.

S: One can't exist without the other.

V: That's right. Sound can exist without an audience, without a listener, but sound cannot exist without silence. The idea of shunyata that we have been talking about all this time is not shunyata as we see it, but shunyata as it is—from the point of view of its own dimension.

S: And it's always the ego that evaluates.

V: That's right, it is ego that evaluates. And it is also because of ego that we find enormous distortion.

S: But once you rid yourself of the ego, you merge with the total situation.

V: That only could happen through ego.

S: You have to pass through that door.

V: You have to have ego—somewhat. [*Laughter*]

S: But it isn't necessarily that we should all like it though? [*Partially inaudible*]

V: At that point, evaluation doesn't apply. Liking or disliking is arbitrary, because ego is also arbitrary.

Student: What would be intelligent discrimination, as in the buddha family wisdom of discrimination, discriminating wisdom?

Vidyadhara: That is nonwatcher, from the point of view of ego. You don't have to watch, you don't have to experience, in other words. The experience is there already; therefore the situation becomes discriminating awareness rather than that you are discriminating. Therefore the whole idea of skillful means is that you work according to the situation rather than your view of the situation. You work accordingly, which is still very slow.

Student: You said that at first shunyata has a very cold quality, and then you said that after you lose your fears, shunyata develops a warm quality. Could you comment on that?

Vidyadhara: To begin with, when we realize that the primitive idea of security does not apply anymore, it is very terrifying, threatening. That comes from the idea of looking for a secure home, to begin with, that you regard spiritual practice as something that secures you. But you come to the understanding that that is not so, that you have to give up the security and give up hope and everything. That gives new perspective to the whole practice. You tend to try to struggle with that, trying to interpret and to reinterpret—that giving up hope is the ultimate hope, giving up security is the ultimate security, and so forth. And we can go on like that, trying to find a way of twisting it around. But we realize that there is no hope, there is no way of finding a new strategy because shunyata is a hard fact. There is nothing you can con about it.

Then, having accepted the whole thing, you can begin to relax. You begin to let things fall through because you realize you have nothing really to lose. If you have anything happen, there is something to gain. So that is the starting point where warmth begins to happen, generosity begins to develop. You have nothing to lose, therefore you have nothing to secure about anything at all. And the spontaneous quality of warmth and compassion is the expression of generosity. You become generous to yourself to begin with; therefore the expression of being generous to others becomes a natural situation.

Student: Would you say something about the primitive energy of anger?

Vidyadhara: Anger seems to be the same as any of the other emotions. You decide to develop repelling vibrations as a way of proving that you don't need anything. You have everything, therefore you can afford to lose, you can afford to crush down and destroy. It is based on passion,

fundamentally speaking. You are so passionately involved in trying to prove something. And the way of demonstrating that passion is rejection, pressing down, destroying.

S: The liberation of it, being prepared for that through the tradition, would create security?

V: It creates apprehension. You find that you have to stick to the dogma as something to hang on to, otherwise you could lose everything—which actually doesn't mean that you won't begin to do that. So the aftereffect [of any of those] is to explode, destroy, crush down, and then stick to your own logic, your own dogma, your own philosophy, which secures you and makes you have the right to be angry.

Student: Could you just think about the death of shunyata?

Vidyadhara: I suppose you could say that the death of shunyata is that when the first two kayas have been passed beyond, prajna becomes jnana. That is the death of shunyata, because shunyata means that you are being aware of emptiness, being aware of formlessness, of the nondualistic state. And that negativity becomes part of the learning process, part of one's experience. So finally, experience begins to merge into nonexperience, nonattainment. That is the experience of dharmakaya, that prahna becomes jnana. Thank you.

S: Do you mean that which is aware of space actually becomes space itself? So there is no, there is not—

V: That's right, yes. I know what you mean. [*Laughter*]

Student: What is the difference between evaluation and discrimination?

Vidyadhara: You could say that evaluation is primitive discrimination. You don't see things as they are, but you need some help to see things as they are, which is putting value on it. But in true discrimination, particularly in terms of discriminating awareness wisdom, you don't need the help of evaluation anymore because you just see things simply as they are without reinforcement. In other words, evaluation seems to have a sense of uncertainty. You need somebody else, somebody else's help to make sure that your experience is the safe one, the right one, the good one or the bad one, whatever. In the case of discriminating, you are not dependent on anything at all. It's just firsthand experience, one blow.

Student: Rinpoche, why does Buddhist literature sometimes say to stop discriminating and other times says discriminating mind is the mind of wisdom? Yesterday you mentioned something about discrimination and projection, that you discriminate that it's four o'clock or you discriminate that this is an enemy and that is a lover, that kind of stuff. That is a kind of discrimination, but I have a feeling that there is also a bad kind. Do you know what that is?

Vidyadhara: Well, as I said already, discriminating in terms of evaluation is primitive discrimination. Once you have perceived things, I don't think you need to evaluate them or that you need confirmation. In the case of discriminating awareness wisdom, evaluation doesn't apply anymore because evaluation confuses you further as to what you are discriminating.

S: Is it more direct?

V: Yes. We could say that it is your flash of experience.

S: What?

V: The spontaneity.

Student: Rinpoche, I've been trying to figure out what you mean by discipline. I'm not exactly sure.

Vidyadhara: Again, there seem to be different levels of discipline: disciplining in order to achieve something, and disciplining because things are as they are. The first one, disciplining because of something, is not really discipline but looking for an alternative situation to occupy your renunciation by accepting something new into it. There's the story of King Prithika, who dreamt elephants went out of the house through the window but their tails could not get out of the window. He thought that was a bad omen for his kingdom, his future. So he asked the Buddha. And the Buddha said: That is a prophetic dream for my followers. They leave home and renounce their homes and sense pleasures, but their viharas, or monasteries, become secondary homes. So they can't get out of that; their tails get stuck.

Then there is another kind of discipline, which is just reducing unnecessary things. It is not necessarily giving up or renouncing, but simplifying, not producing new stuff or further confusions to occupy yourself. It is like the practice of meditation, for instance. It is a simple technique, a simple practice, and you just work with that. You are not regarded as following a course, but you regard your practice as purely relating with

your basic innate nature. No further stuff has been introduced at all. The same thing applies in your living situation. You live a disciplined life by not introducing further chaos. That chaos might take the form of seduction or the form of destroying seduction, whatever it may be. Both seem to be sidetracks. So discipline is being true, to the right point, not introducing further stuff, not giving yourself further toys.

Student: You spoke of the obligatory emotions of the ego, the repertory of emotions driving the ego. I wonder if you mean that they are obligatory in the sense that in the state one is in—and the ego is the result of that state—those emotions are also necessary, that they are both necessary and convincing to this state. You also said that the ego is distorting something in the process. Is it the material of the higher emotions that is being distorted? Is that material always there, but in wrong function in the state where we are within the sleep of ego? And then one's recognition begins to awaken about how lost one is in this state and that recognition begins to free that material back into the place in you where it can function with its right normality. That is, you might mature emotions or develop emotions through freeing yourself from using the material of emotions.

Vidyadhara: Obligatory is simply from ego's point of view. It is obligatory because we have to maintain ourselves by presenting all kinds of occupations. We reject that which is about to attack our territory and we invite that which secures our territory. That seems to be the obligatory ape-instinct ego, animal instinct of ego.

S: To maintain its state?

V: To maintain itself, yes. But at the same time, the validity of ego is the question. Actually, there is no such thing as ego as a solid thing at all. Should we regard ego as a substantial entity? According to ego's appearance in the past, the meditative path as well as our own experience shows that ego is not founded on solid ground, but ego is founded on playing with interactions. Ego is founded on relative situations. Unless there is the logic of relativity, ego cannot exist; it cannot exist independent of relative law. So ego becomes irrelevant from that point of view for the very reason that there is no such thing as ultimate ego. If there is going to be an ultimate one then it has to be free from relative notions. So ego is not relevant. Therefore its obligatory actions are also not relevant.

Student: If it's a false state, or a relative state, still it malfunctions possibly higher energy processes and it maintains the reduction, a pathological reduction of the energies of consciousness.

Vidyadhara: It's hard to maintain oneself. You'd rather stick to your whatever, your lie or your confusion.

S: Without knowing?

V: Without knowing. Even though you might know that it is a possible failure of establishing firm ground, still you may feel you should try to set up some kind of security, so you do it.

S: You like the mistake, you like it.

V: Try to like it.

Student: Rinpoche, would spiritual materialism permeate as long as one has an ego? I guess it could be equated to that idea of gaining something spiritual.

Vidyadhara: I suppose in the subtle sense, as long as there is ego there would be spiritual materialism, definitely, as a faint subconscious desire. But the crude quality of spiritual materialism could be understood, including ego. While you are not free from ego, you still can understand spiritual materialism and take certain solid and crude measures to avoid spiritual materialism. It is not really a refined thing, to the point of dissolving ego. One can do something about it. At the same time, that doesn't mean there is no tendency of spiritual materialism at all. As long as there is ego, there will be some tendency of achievement, of getting somewhere, becoming a better person, whatever. There are always those tendencies there.

S: I was wondering also why there seems to be such an overabundance of spiritual materialism in the West.

V: Well, the Western mind operates in terms of achievement. If you are a climber of mountains, a mountaineer, you don't just climb, you climb in order to get some reward, break a record, make world history, or whatever. So even if the search is supposedly a pleasurable one, still there is meaning behind it. You must be doing something always. You must be. You must not be idle. The same thing applies even if we are meditating. We try to prove to ourselves that we are not being idle, but we are productive people whether we meditate [or not]. We meditate in order to be more productive! [*Laughter*] That kind of relation goes on always. So it's a natural tendency—losing grip is socially, economically, something that we don't want to face.

S: Is it ego, or ego image, that represses that? Because all these examples seem to be identical to the image we have of ourselves, in other words, ego image. Can't ego exist without the image?

V: That seems to be saying the same thing. Ego is built out of image, so if you don't have image you don't have ego either, because ego thrives on image. It's saying the same thing. There is no such thing as a subtle ego. Ego is always based on some form, some particular energy which is obvious.

S: You mean that without image there is no ego?

V: There is no ego, that's right.

Student: Rinpoche, sometimes I just like to sit and do nothing, not even meditate, but just maybe feel my mouth get dry or my little finger hurt or something like that. But after a very short while I get panicky because so little happens. And yet I would like to be able to do that. It is like I'm enjoying that somehow, and then I'm not able to.

Vidyadhara: You are enjoying that?

S: Well, I think it's only pleasure, I don't know. The moment I'm doing it I'm enjoying it, but after a short while I feel panicky, like nothing is happening here at all. I can't explain why I get panicky.

V: I suppose we could say that when you lose your grip on something when you are alarmed; that always tends to happen. It's a question of meditation being especially presented so that you lose your grip on ego. So it's very frightening at the beginning. You begin to realize that you are losing something, but at the same time you don't know what that something is. But something is leaving you.

S: So should I forget about being panicky and just continue?

V: Even if you try to forget the panicking, it will be there always anyway.

S: Or should I accept the panicking and just go on?

V: Rather.

S: What?

V: Rather.

S: Rather? [*Laughter*]

V: Mm-hmm. [*Laughter*]

Student: Rinpoche, in terms of the image, the ego being in the image, when you look at us, do you see the image before our expression of ego distorting something very high?

Vidyadhara: Hmmm! [*Laughter*]

S: How can you make me see that?

V: Well, if you were willing to see it, you could see it.

S: I like my expressions, you mean.

V: That's what I mean.

S: The momentum and the action of it is monumentally gripping!

V: Yes. [*Laughter*] There is no question of how to do it, but if you are willing to do it, it's there. That's very difficult to accept because we want to know *how* to do it, which means another kind of security. You simply refuse: you can't just do it, you have to be told how to do it. That is one of the biggest problems that a lot of my students have, it seems.

Student: Sir, do various amounts of hopelessness develop along with the development of certain psychological states along the path?

Vidyadhara: Well, it depends.

S: But if it happens, it doesn't happen all at once but different amounts of it tend to go along—

V: Not necessarily. Depending on how much you give in to losing grip, that much development takes place.

Student: What if a mountain becomes like a volcano?

Vidyadhara: Then it is so. What about it?

S: It's pretty frightening!

V: Delightful [*inaudible*], too.

S: But is there a good way to pacify a mountain?

V: No, it doesn't sound like a practical thing to do.

Student: What about surrendering?

Vidyadhara: Even if you try to surrender in order to pacify, that in itself becomes a game. You are thrown back. You see, what we are doing in this case is dealing with natural forces. You can't strategize and you can't manipulate them because they are natural forces. You can think of different ways of touching fire—think this is not fire, think this is water, think it is going to be nice and warm—but nonetheless your hands are going to get burned whatever you try. [*Laughter*] There's no way of fooling the elements. What we are dealing with is the most powerful element of all, which is called mind.

S: But didn't you sort of guarantee that the operation would be a

slow, surgical thing, that the operation would be very slow—not like the Naropa thing.

V: Well, there have to be some dramatic operations sometimes, as you say.

Student: Rinpoche, Milarepa described his mind as residing in dharmakaya. I know he just said it, but nonetheless it seemed somewhat strange. And in the *Diamond Sutra,* Subhuti describes his enlightenment. The context there was "I think indeed that I don't, so I am." But he's saying that he is! You'd think that a person in the dharmakaya would not care about that. Why would he say, "My mind resides in the dharmakaya?"

Vidyadhara: The whole point is that you are not reduced to deaf and dumb.

S: I was afraid of that answer.

V: You become more intelligent.

S: Is it the dharmakaya itself speaking at that point?

V: Dharmakaya, yes. Dharmakaya is dharma body, the body which is the dharma itself. It has developed all kinds of skillful ways of presenting the teachings, so it could speak for itself.

S: And it is aware of itself enough to.

V: I wouldn't say aware of itself, but it happens that way. [*Laughter*]

Student: There is no way you could compare that mind to our own as we experience it now?

Vidyadhara: Well, I suppose we could try very hard to compare, but it wouldn't be accurate to do that. You have to speak through the language of metaphor. Then the metaphor itself becomes a hang-up. It's like the old story of the person who points out the moon to his child. When the child asks, "What is the moon?" he points and says, "That is the moon." And the child says, "Oh I never realized that the moon was oblong." [*Laughter*]

Student: Is the light inside the mind part of shunyata, or is it a sidetrack, some kind of diversion?

Vidyadhara: The light?

S: The light, the clear light.

V: It depends on what you refer to as light. Obviously it is not just a visual matter.

S: When you go inside your mind, it's like there's a bright light, and if you keep meditating it gets brighter and brighter.

V: Does it?

S: I think so. They say there are seven steps on the way to the third eye.

V: Um—no! [*Laughter*]

S: I was wondering what that had to do with shunyata?

V: Doesn't sound like it, particularly. [*Laughter*] Shunyata is very simple. That's why it is called shunyata, empty. There's nothing, absolutely nothing.

S: But what is the light, what is that?

V: Reflections, I suppose. [Injuries?] tend to make, create a spark.

Student: When you talk about surrendering ego, at least to me, it is a very fearful thing. Without the fear though, could the surrender of ego be the first act of generosity from your point of view?

Vidyadhara: But that seems to be what we have to start with. There's no other way, you see. There's no way of getting sedatives so that you won't be afraid of surrendering and *then* surrendering. That's not possible at all. We have to use the fear itself as a stepping-stone. That's the style of practice that is always presented—using whatever is there as an obstacle, as a ladder, as a stepping-stone. That seems to be the only way that we can do it. We can't start perfectly, but we have to start in a clumsy way. Finally, that clumsiness becomes perfection because we are willing to relate with it. It wears itself out. That seems to be the only way that we can do it—whatever we do.

S: By attrition it wears itself out, by doing it?

V: By actually pushing it, doing it—*as though* you are doing it, rather.

S: Does that happen only through meditation, or are these things that you can consciously have in your life?

V: Anything in your life. If your life is regarded as a learning process, there will be all kinds of opportunities to do that.

Student: Rinpoche, is it possible that people who haven't lost their ego yet will sometimes act in an egoless way?

Vidyadhara: There are always possibilities. Glimpses of egolessness

happen quite frequently. I wouldn't say that you have to get to a definite state, necessarily. There are always possibilities of doing something by chance—apparently by chance.

Well, we might have to close our sermon on shunyata.

Student: I have sort of a ragged question—in the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation,* Gampopa described a whole series of hells, eighteen hells, and I don't know how many heavens. He also talks very definitely, that if you do this, the fate of that will naturally be that. How literally is all that supposed to be taken or what? [*Laughter*]

Vidyadhara: Well, the thing is that it is possible. It is possible and it might be literal.

S: You mean those hells actually exist in so many miles down in the depths of the earth? And you have beings boiling you in hot copper and putting things into your mouth and—

V: Possible. [*Laughter*] I think saying it is not literal, that it is purely symbolic, has a different tone to it. Somehow it is not wise to say that it is purely symbolic. But on the whole, what is the difference between symbol and reality, anyway?

S: We use the symbol as an expression of something which cannot be—

V: Precisely, yes. So the intensity of the result of aggression can only be described by hell, descriptions of how grotesquely you could be boiled or punished or tortured.

S: What marks the karmic sequences he lays out there?

V: Well, nobody has done any research work on that particularly, [*laughter*] like the study of physics and chemistry. But it is based on, or depends on, the level of absent-mindedness, of not being on the spot. There are all kinds of sidetracks that you suffer, anyway.

S: But he gives specific instances: if you do this, that happens.

V: That's right. Yes.

S: That's very precise speaking. How precise is it supposed to be?

V: Up to you.

S: I can't figure it out, that's why I am asking you.

V: Try to figure it out! [*Laughter*]

S: Well, *inaudible phrase]*—

Shunyata study seems to have evolved itself from the groundwork of shunyata, in which we discussed hopelessness and disappointment and

so on—that you have no ground to work with. Then there's the path, in which giving up hope becomes connected with warmth and generosity. Finally one begins to realize that one can be generous, how to be generous. From that path, the final point of shunyata transcends, relating with shunyata as an experience. The question of goal and path does not exist. So it seems that the shunyata principle altogether is the ground in which everything functions, everything happens—it is the space that accommodates everything.

There are books on the *Prajnaparamita Hridaya* and *Prajnaparamita Alankara,* translated by Dr. Conze, which would probably be helpful if you want to follow up and study further the principle of shunyata [*Buddhist Wisdom Books* and the *Prajnaparamita in Eight Thousand Lines*]. It seems that shunyata is, on the whole, one of the very important points of Buddhist teaching. The ideas of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness, or egolessness, are founded in the basic environment, basic idea of shunyata.

And quite possibly we could have longer seminars at some stage. This particular seminar seems to be just purely an appetizer. [*Laughter*] Thank you for being very patient.

Glimpses of Mahayana

Edited by Judith L. Lief

ONE

Bad News and Good News

THE SUBJECT OF THIS BOOK is mahayana Buddhism. It is about spirituality as a discipline and how we can exercise that discipline in day-to-day life. We are not purely discussing religious theory; we are talking about actual experience. I would like to make that quite clear. It is a spiritual approach rather than a religious one. Ego, or confused neurosis, always tends to find new crutches to support its own existence. So taking up particular religious ideas might only serve to enrich that tendency to prop up the self-existence of ego.

Both the hinayana and the mahayana[1] are processes of cutting through that basic tendency of ego, which is called spiritual materialism. Although different techniques might be involved, the basic approach is the same. It is not based on becoming higher, greater, or better persons but on finding tendencies of "awake" that exist within us. It is an uncovering process rather than expanding out. At the same time, there are differences between the hinayana and the mahayana. We need some kind of footing as to those differences, to make the basic pattern clear.

In the hinayana, we work with the basic characteristics of neurosis as a way of cutting down the unnecessary chaos that arises from ego's mentality. It is a cutting-down process. The hinayana could be called narrow-minded, in that it does not make any allowance for entertain-

1. In this discussion, the terms *hinayana* and *mahayana* refer to stages on the three-yana journey of hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana, rather than to the different schools of Buddhism.

ment or therapy. It is direct, definite, stubborn. No therapy and no entertainment in the ego-oriented style are permitted at all.

Hinayana presents the narrow path in order to develop an understanding of the open path, or open way, of mahayana. The narrow path is to experience that life is pain: it is dwelling in pain and growing up in pain. The whole process of life is wrapped up in pain because the basic tendency of ego is to yearn so much toward pleasure. We try to ward off pain and the notion of pain. However, by doing so and by yearning toward pleasure, the notion of pain gets a lot of attention. Consequently our pain is increased, because it is being teased and fiddled with so much. It's like scratching a wound—by doing so, we only get it more infected. The hinayana way is to realize that situation. We accept the fact that we have a wound, but we don't have to scratch it even if it itches. Instead we relate with our wound. We accept that we have a wound: it is part of our bodily chaos and irritation. Hinayana is about accepting that life situation.

Without the hinayana, without a good foundation, we can't build the fortress of mahayana. It is important to know that life is so much to the point. On the one hand, we might say that life is very complicated and chaotic. It's difficult to keep up with all the problems we go through. On the other hand, life is extremely simple. It can be simplified into one phrase: ego pain. Existence is based on the continual birth and death of pain—and ego tried to make that process continuous and to hang on to it. Unless we realize the narrowness of life—narrow in this case meaning that we can't escape from those two basic things, ego and pain—we can't develop the greater vision of mahayana, the great vehicle, at all. We have to start from one atom, one basic point, which acts as a catalyst for the larger world.

Someone told me that ten years ago he had read a book on Buddhism and found it extremely depressing. He said to himself, "Who wants to get into this?" Instead he joined a love-and-light path. However, he found himself asking that same question again later, which brought him back to the basic meaning of pain. Sooner or later we have to realize that life is very simple, extremely simple. Life consists of the notion of escape, or trying to avoid pain, and the notion of giving one's existence an identity, or trying to increase ego. In order to understand mahayana and its ideals, we have to understand that matter-of-fact situation.

Mahayana is the inspiration of the open way of allegiance to buddha,

or "awake." You associate yourself with buddha; that is the mahayana way. Hinayana is allegiance to samsara, associating yourself with samsara and relating with the samsaric process, which is called renunciation. In other words, buddha cannot exist without samsara; nirvana cannot exist without samsara; awake cannot exist without asleep.

At the beginning we have to realize the meaning of life, which consists of erroneous beliefs of all kinds. That is what led us to this point and to our search for the teachings—which could be an erroneous belief as well. We are here because we made lots of mistakes, piles and piles of mistakes. That we happen to be here discussing this matter together is a result of such mistakes. Whether it is the right mistake or the wrong mistake, it is still an accident that happens to be bringing us together in this life, discussing the whole question of spirituality.

Spirituality is experiencing the narrowness of life. We no longer have any areas to escape to or areas to improvise. It's like birth: we can only come out of one channel from our mother's womb, there's no way of improvising. Having realized that situation fully and completely, having worked on the discipline of relating with pain, impermanence, and suffering, then we might have a *new* area to explore, which is that life is not as grim as it seems. There are sparks of light happening here and there, sparks of intelligence. For the very reason that we are agitated by our life, there is a spark of intelligence. There is hope—the hope for enlightenment. The reason we are dissatisfied with our life is that the message of mahayana is coming through.

In traditional language, that spark of intelligence is referred to as *bodhichitta,* which means "awakened heart," "the heart of enlightenment." Bodhichitta is always there. Because of that heart of enlightenment, instead of constantly cutting ourselves down and condemning ourselves, or purely seeing the negative aspects of life, we come to another conclusion, which is that we are already awake. We have within us *tathagatagarbha,* which means "the essence or seed of enlightened mind," or "buddha mind." That is the good news. But it seems that you cannot create good news without bad news to begin with. So the hinayana approach deliberately creates the bad news: that we are trapped, we are hopeless, we are helpless, and the meaning of life is pain.

The mahayana approach, the good news, is that even if life is pain and you are trapped in samsaric imprisonment—how do you *know* that? If you know that, if you have some notion of *discovering* that, maybe

there is something in you that is actually able to see that—which is *good* news. From that point of view, hinayana and mahayana are reciprocal. The mahayana is based on a sense of self-respect, openness, and hope. The hinayana is based on a sense of hopelessness, narrowness, that there is no other way, no alternative. That is equally important, extremely important.

This notion of buddha nature, *embryonic* enlightenment, is one of the dominant inspirations of the mahayana. It is embryonic because it is still looked at with suspicion—it may not happen. It is still conditioned by the hope of becoming solid or getting into some solid situation. Buddha nature is also very *pragmatic*. In order to acknowledge such an embryonic situation, you have to work on it and awaken it. Contemplating or theorizing alone doesn't help—it takes a tremendous energy boost to exercise the buddha nature as if you had already awoken.

Although you may be half asleep, you still have to wake up and acknowledge your buddha nature as if you were completely awake. That is trusting in the heart. You believe that you could relate with yourself and your potentialities in spite of your imprisonment in samsara. You could still make love to yourself. You could love yourself and appreciate yourself because those two situations do exist in you. One of the basic principles or foundations of mahayana is that life is workable after all; it can be handled. But a certain amount of warmth and sympathy is necessary—toward yourself to begin with. And again, in order to develop the mahayana, it is necessary to begin first with the hinayana.

Discussion

Seed of Enlightenment

Student: Is the seed of enlightenment you spoke of always alive in us, or can it perish?

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche: As long as there is a question about the subject, it can't have perished. Acknowledging the restlessness of life is the seed. Seeking pleasure and warding off pain is the seed. In other words, unless you are a robot or a jellyfish, something is happening, which is the seed. Even a jellyfish might have buddha nature.

Renunciation

S: Rinpoche, you spoke of hinayana as being the way of renunciation, and renunciation as being the way of relating to samsara. Could you say more about that?

CTR: Renunciation is completely relating with the fact that you are trapped in an extremely strong prison. The only way of dealing with that situation is not to try to get out, but to try to make yourself at home communicating with the things that caught you. It is like having a net around you. The whole thing is very narrow. Escape is not possible; therefore a better, more pleasurable situation is not possible. Renunciation is accepting that you have only one or two situations to work on. There are no other areas that you can dream up—and even if you dream, your dream is cut down. Renunciation means realizing the nuisance of yourself.

Narrowness and Openness

S: In our daily life it's possible to experience both narrowness and openness. What does one do?

CTR: The first step is to acknowledge the narrowness. Then, having acknowledged that, you have to take some kind of leap to bring that realization to a functional level. That is to say, first you feel the narrowness, the imprisonment. You feel that there is no alternative in life, that life has only one track, which is suffering and ego. Then, realizing that, you dance on that one track. So that one track isn't purely further depression, but it is further excitement as well, because you have no alternatives to play around with.

S: But what if you experience both states at the same time? Do you dance with both of them?

CTR: Sure. I think that's possible.

S: That becomes quite a confused space.

CTR: Then explore the confusion, which is also a dance.

Idiot Compassion

S: You said something about compassion toward ourselves. How much compassion should we have toward ourselves? Are we too harsh with ourselves?

CTR: Generally, we are too *compassionate* with ourselves. We constantly seek pleasure, so we try to be overly kind to ourselves and delude ourselves. We try to shield ourselves from our mistakes as if nothing had happened. The hinayana way begins with the realization that everything is very serious, that you have no alternatives. In your attempt to be too kind to yourself, you have trapped yourself in your idiot compassion, which creates further pain.

If you become more familiar with that pattern and realize the alternativelessness, then you could become more compassionate. I think that is why hinayana is important at the beginning—to realize that you can't just treat yourself as if you were what you would like to be. To begin with, you have to cut down your indulgence. You have to realize that if you indulge yourself, that only creates further pain. That realization itself is hopeful. It brings more encouragement. Compassion does not mean creating pleasure, but rather creating a sense of trust in yourself and not condemning. This kind of compassion can be developed if you have the relative intention to do so.

Indulgence

S: Isn't it indulgent to try to improve your situation at all, to move geographically or try to get a better job? If you give up alternatives, do you simply stick with the boredom of your current situation?

CTR: Changing jobs doesn't have anything to do with it. Moving from an armchair to the sofa, which is more comfortable, or drinking tea instead of coffee—those don't have anything to do with the larger situation. In talking about indulgence, I don't mean that you have to punish yourself constantly. Changing your physical situation doesn't make any difference. Indulgence is the general attitude of wanting to achieve a state of solid pleasure. That is the basic point. It is a psychological issue, a question of trying to secure your being.

S: There might be a point where you need to make a choice.

CTR: Choice is related to the present situation. You have only one situation at a time; you cannot have two situations happening simultaneously. You have the present situation and you have a possibility. When you make a choice, you start with the present situation rather than the possibility of some hypothetical situation that hasn't yet materialized. That seems to be the point of having ground.

Loving Oneself

S: By loving oneself more, do you mean not judging yourself for being in samsara, for being pleasure-seeking or involved in ego pain, but just accepting that that's where you are?

CTR: That seems to be the point. Loving oneself means accepting both the positive and the negative, whatever there is. It is not only loving, but also regarding the whole thing as fertile ground, as a workable situation—like a field with manure on it.

Trust in the Heart

S: You talked about trust in the heart providing the energy that stirs you toward enlightenment. That is confusing because what we experience is so totally dependent on the confusion of our moods, on insubstantial stuff. I don't really know how to get to the heart. It seems to suggest a ground.

CTR: It does suggest a ground, but the ground doesn't have to be flat ground. The ground could be the current that flows through, the ocean as ground as opposed to the land as ground. The ocean goes up and down, but it is still ground. Likewise, dissatisfactions could be regarded as ground. It's a question of whether you are relating with the situation as workable or whether you are taking advantage of frivolity. Even frivolity could be related to as ground, somewhat, but you shouldn't be possessed by it because in frivolity you are no longer experiencing the seriousness of the pain. Frivolity does not relate with anything except its own irony or foolishness. It is a mask. By relating with it, you might crush the mask. That seems to be the only way to relate with it.

You can't really start with an ideal situation. In fact, as a product of discriminating intelligence, which compares grounds, you may find that the present ground is completely insubstantial—but there is still some energy going on that could be worked with. I think you have to allow yourself to have some kind of stepping-stone. It may not be as solid as you would like, but it is still a stepping-stone.

TWO

A Golden Buddha

IN THE MAHAYANA, inspiration comes from experiencing the spark of intelligence or enlightenment in us. Discovering that potential is one of the fundamental characteristics of the mahayana. Having looked into our feelings of inadequacy, pain, and confusion, we see them as neither good nor bad, but as *workable*. In our day-to-day life, we find that the search for pleasure, either materialistic or spiritual, is unconvincing. Behind that whole approach is a sense of dissatisfaction and continual struggle. Recognizing that dissatisfaction and struggle is the discovery of the first noble truth, the truth of suffering, or duhkha. However, that discovery of the universality of pain is the discovery of buddha nature as well. That realization is not stupid or ignorant, but intelligent. So the struggle we go through is an expression of enlightened mind. The bad news in itself is good news.

The enlightenment potential, or buddha nature, has two components: fundamental intelligence and basic warmth. Fundamental intelligence, or discriminating awareness, allows us to look at situations in life critically—hopefully even to the point of searching for spirituality, the ultimate goal. Basic warmth means that even though we may condemn ourselves as bad, weak, or confused, by its very nature, such condemnation is an expression of warmth, strangely enough. By looking at ourselves critically, we expect something good will come of it, so there is a sense of ambition. Condemning ourselves is the ultimate hope, in fact.

Such virtues may be entirely spiritually materialistic or psychologically materialistic. Nevertheless, the driving force behind them, the very

existence of such potential, is the buddha nature operating. At the same time, that potential is entirely dependent on the realization of pain. We start from that. So pain becomes a kind of crutch or stepping-stone to buddha nature. But at this point, buddha nature is still embryonic or potential. It is embryonic because it is a *glimpse* of hope rather than an actual experience of complete hope.

The great teacher Taranatha talks about the embryonic awakened state of mind being solid, eternal, permanent. His approach is challenged by others, who say that is not the experience of real buddha nature but of ultimate ego. They say that it is precisely the function of ego—to be ambitious, to strive toward achievement, and to try to associate with what is solid, positive, and hopeful.

On the one hand, it is true that buddha nature could be regarded as ego. Enlightened mind becomes ego because a sense of security is imposed on it, a feeling that we will live forever. Ego is all those attitudes that are imposed on buddha nature. Buddha nature, or basic sanity, is exploited and used as backing to reassure us of our existence. Buddha nature is used to reassure us that we are secure and healthy, that we will never experience death. On the other hand, if there is no sense of permanent security, no sense of using buddha nature as a pawn, no sense of maintaining a relationship with simple-minded hope and fear—then buddha nature becomes just simple straightforward buddha nature, or enlightenment mind. So, on the whole, buddha nature, the attitude directed toward enlightenment, is very solid, very continuous. It is extremely definite, without any mistakes.

Buddha nature, or tathagatagarbha, has many attributes: it is unborn, unobstructed, and it does not dwell on anything. To begin with, it is continuous and solid because it is unborn. It is not based on or reinforced by something that already exists. Buddha nature does not have to be given birth to by effort or preconception, in the way that giving birth to a child requires a father and a mother. In this case, parents are synonomous with preconceptions. Buddha mind or enlightened mind is not dependent on such preconceptions; therefore, it is unborn, unoriginated.

Another attribute of buddha nature is that it is unobstructed. Its flow cannot be prevented by any causal characteristics that depend on karmic chain reactions. So it is free from karma. Our intelligence, our restlessness, does not need nursing or securing. It is constantly, intelligently, critical of pain. Our restlessness is unobstructed and does not need to be nursed.

Another attribute of buddha nature is that it does not dwell on anything, which means that we cannot categorize it as being associated with good or bad, pleasure or pain. Enlightened intelligence shines through both pain and pleasure; in other words, through any kind of cognitive mind. So the unconditioned cognitive mind that functions in our basic being is the true enlightened mind. There's nothing very obscure about this. It has nothing to do with mystical experience or anything like that at all. It is functional, simple, direct, intelligent, sane, and pragmatic.

The basic point about buddha nature is that this restless mind is the buddha nature. Because it is so intelligent, therefore it is restless. It is so transparent that we can't put any patch on it to mask over the irritation—if we do, the irritation still comes through. We can't hold the irritation back or maintain ego-style comfort anymore. The purpose of ego is to search for permanent, solid comfort. Even though this search might cost a lot in terms of temporarily sacrificing and inflicting pain on ourselves, we hope that in the end we will finally achieve ultimate comfort or security—but each time we begin to achieve that, something else goes wrong.

In tantric literature, buddha mind is referred to as a lamp in a vase. If a vase is cracked, the imperfections of the vase can be seen because of the light shining through from inside. In mahayana literature, a popular analogy refers to enlightened mind as the sun and ego's security as the clouds that prevent the sun from shining through.

The idea of buddha mind is not purely a concept or a theoretical, metaphysical ideal. It is something extremely real that we can experience ourselves. In fact, it is the ego that feels that we have an ego. It is ego that tells us, "My ego is bothering me. I feel very self-conscious about having to be me. I feel that I have a tremendous burden in me, and I wonder what the best way to get rid of it is." Yet all those expressions of restlessness that keep coming out of us are the expression of buddha nature, the expression of unborn, unobstructed, and nondwelling.

It is said in the *Guhyasamajatantra* that all sentient beings are good vessels for the mahayana teaching, that we can exclude nobody. Therefore, we should take delight and cheer up. Also, in one of his opening speeches, so to speak, the Buddha discussed which vessels are appropriate to receive the teachings, who could be excluded and who could be included. He said, "Let everyone come and join. Invite *everybody!*" This approach of seeing buddha nature as all-pervading is one of the

basic threads of tantra as well as of the mahayana. That upsurge of the energy of awakened mind is energy one can use and transmute in the tantric teachings.

In taking the bodhisattva vow, we are acknowledging that we have a great many family characteristics of the family of the Buddha. We are acknowledging that potential, or buddha nature. In fact, any kind of ambition we might have in our life, such as trying to maintain or advance ourselves, could be regarded as an expression of enlightened mind. It has been said that even the most vicious animals have the instinct to take care of their young and be loving to them, which is an expression of buddha nature.

When people have a glimpse of buddha nature, it is not a glimpse in the sense of viewing something: it is a gap rather than a glimpse. That gap is the experience that comes out of seeing through the veils of ego. But whether we have a glimpse of it or not, the buddha mind is still functioning in us all the time. It occurs in the most bizarre, cheap, and confused styles we might present, as well as in whatever extremely profound, dignified, and wise experiences we might have. All of those are the expressions of buddha nature.

One of the foundations of the mahayana approach to life is the realization that completely perfect enlightenment, samyaksambuddha, is no longer a myth—it is real. For the hinayanist, enlightenment is pure myth. First one has to attain the arhat stage, which is a stage of absorption, and from there one has to advance to the enlightened attitude. But in the mahayana approach, as Taranatha puts it, everybody carries in his or her heart a perfectly produced image of the Buddha, beautifully made, cast in gold.

Everybody has such an image in his or her heart. That seems to be true. It's very real, delightfully real—and the unreality makes things *more* real! That is the ground of the great vehicle: before you think big, you have to think real. That seems to be the starting point of the Lion's Roar, the proclamation of mahayana. Mahayana starts with the faith and conviction that nobody is condemned or confused.

Discussion

Ego and Buddha Nature

Student: Because of our confusion, because we don't understand life, we may sit down to read a book on Buddhism. Are you saying that the

impulse to try to find greater clarity or truth that prompts us to pick up the book is enlightened mind coming through?

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. Whether you understand it or not, that very attempt is buddha nature.

S: Then where would the ego come in?

CTR: Ego's approach is the mentality of the lucrative, the profitable: "I should be getting something out of this book; otherwise my effort is wasted." It's an unrealistic, businesslike mentality, the idea that if things don't make sense, your search is wasted.

S: You said that the ego is buddha nature. Could you also dwell on your ego *without* having buddha nature involved?

CTR: If you are trying to separate them, that is the work of ego. That very project becomes ego's project. The impulse to go forward is buddha nature—any afterthoughts are ego. The first impulse, the first clear driving force, is buddha nature. If you lay an affectation over basic sanity, it becomes neurosis. Whether your attitude is that there is nothing good in ego, that there is no buddha nature, or you try to make things better or more solid, it is still an affectation.

S: What attitude *would* bring forth buddha nature?

CTR: Having *no* attitude, just being simple and straightforward.

Trust in the Heart

S: Can it become dangerous to believe that one has had a glimpse of buddha nature? At what point does trust in the heart become dangerous?

CTR: It could become dangerous if you begin to use it as a credential, as a way of expanding your power over either yourself or others. The same thing applies to any kind of practice. If your practice is just pure, direct practice, that seems to be very simple. But if your practice becomes somewhat heroic, or connected with finding definite proof, it is dangerous.

Impulse and Spontaneity

S: Rinpoche, you said that the impulsive afterthought is ego, while the immediate thought is buddha nature. How do you distinguish between impulsiveness and spontaneity?

CTR: To begin with, impulse is not spontaneous. It may *seem* sponta-

neous, but it doesn't have the relaxed quality of spontaneity. Impulse comes out like a sneeze, as the result of pressure; whereas spontaneity is like yawning, it has less pressure and it takes its time. A glimpse of buddha nature is not violent; whereas impulse is very violent, desperate. Spontaneity is buddha nature, and impulse is ego. Impulse never reaches the first stage; impulse always trails behind. Impulse is never up to date; it is the rebound. First you see, then you react. Impulse never comes firsthand; it is a reaction.

Continuity of Buddha Nature

S: It sounds as though buddha nature is intermittent.

CTR: The restlessness is the sharpest and most immediate situation we experience, whereas buddha nature itself is something we can't catch hold of and put in a container. That is why it is associated with light. Buddha nature is happening constantly, but ego doesn't have a chance to register it. Buddha nature is constantly ahead of you, you being ego at this point. It is constantly ahead of you.

S: So you are continually dissatisfied?

CTR: Yes. The intelligence is always shining through.

Buddha Nature and Groundlessness

S: Could you relate buddha nature with the image of falling, of having no ground at all?

CTR: That seems to be the whole point: buddha nature brings the realization that there is no ground.

S: But it doesn't seem as if you are seeing anything.

CTR: It isn't *seeing*, really, in terms of reporting back to your brain or anything like that. I don't know what word you could use. The usual word for this is jnana, or knowing—but you don't even *know*. I suppose we could make a distinction between looking and seeing. You see first; you look afterward.

S: Could you say that buddha nature sees that there is no ground because it sees the ego coming up over and over again?

CTR: Buddha nature is not regarded as another kind of cognitive mind functioning. It is part of our cognitive mind, but it supersedes cognitive mind. It naturally sees the fruitlessness of struggle—as well as

encouraging struggle in order to prove its fruitlessness. The whole thing is sort of an automatic, inbuilt, natural mechanism which is trying to wear itself out. In other words, without buddha nature, ego cannot exist. Ego is constantly teased by buddha nature into activating itself, so either it is perpetuating itself or wearing itself out.

S: Rinpoche, when you talk about having no ground, it seems to imply that there are no rules about what to do, or about whether what you are doing at a certain moment is good or bad. That seems very confusing. It leaves you hanging on a cliff.

CTR: That seems to be the whole point, that you don't have any reference point to hold on to. And the fear is the fear of losing ego. But losing ego doesn't mean that you wouldn't know how to brush your teeth or make a cup of tea. In fact, you would probably do those things better. However, it is quite fearful, even in theory—and the *experience* is going to be even heavier.

Why Discuss Buddha Nature?

S: Why do we have to concern ourselves with this? It seems to happen spontaneously as we go along. If we are practicing and learning and becoming more aware of our groundlessness, why do we have to discuss buddha nature?

CTR: I don't know why, but we find ourselves questioning ourselves. You could ask why we question at all, but that in itself is a question.

Buddha Nature in America

S: Rinpoche, if an individual is not into Buddhism, or a spiritual path, if he's a businessman, restless and ambitious to make more money, to make his life better, if he is not aware of ego or of duality—is his restlessness still considered a spark of intelligence, or buddha nature?

CTR: Yes, I think so, in the long run. This seems to have been happening in this country already. Your father, your great-grandfathers, and your great-great-great-grandfathers were all preoccupied with building a brand-new world—so they built it. Then the whole thing turned around, and now we are talking about buddha nature. Without missionaries, or people proselytizing these ideas in this country, the country itself is awakening to this idea of buddha nature. It might take a long time for

people to realize their buddha nature, and businessmen might have to freak out. Nevertheless, the effort is not wasted, although it might take several lifetimes to come about. In fact, this whole question has come up as a result of that restlessness and as a result of those people putting in their effort.

Traditional Societies

S: Rinpoche, how about the case of traditional societies that seem to go along their leisured way and don't change very much, societies in which people seem content to do things the way their forefathers did them?

CTR: Generally, you can't have an ideal solid society operating for thousands of years, although I suppose you could say that Tibet was close to it. When I left my country recently, it was still a medieval society, but then a force from the outside thrust us out. Since we didn't make any new discoveries, somebody else made a new discovery for us. We were pushed out. So there can be no such thing as a permanent traditional society as long as people desire to be comfortable and happy. But I suppose the more speed there is, the more buddha nature is coming through. We could say that.

Security and Insecurity

S: If we are aware of buddha nature, isn't that a type of security in itself?

CTR: It could go either way. If we are aware that we have a buddha nature, that is security—but we are also aware that we might lose our ego by being involved with buddha nature, and that is not security. Knowing that you cannot witness your own burial is quite uncomfortable.

S: You said that ego tries to use buddha nature to ensure its own security.

CTR: Ego tries anything it can lay its hands on.

S: But ego itself is buddha nature, right?

CTR: Yes. That is why it can be used up. Otherwise it would become a war between buddha nature and ego.

S: It seems confusing that buddha nature as ego would try to use buddha nature.

CTR: Yes, isn't that absurd?

S: Ego and buddha nature in this case are almost the same. Isn't that a paradox, the notion that buddha nature and ego are interchangeable?

CTR: It is like a healing wound. When your wound is healed, the scab falls away; but at the same time, the scab is part of the wound. The fundamental idea is something like that.

THREE

Awakening Buddha Nature

IN REGARD TO buddha nature, the question seems to be: How can we provoke or awaken that basic potential? Traditionally, the aspiration to develop compassion comes from experiencing the misery and pain that we and our fellow beings are going through; from allegiance toward the spiritual friend; and from a sense of dedication, in that we are not afraid to apply our experience in working with sentient beings.

Buddha nature is not regarded as a peaceful state of mind or, for that matter, as a disturbed one either. It is a state of intelligence that questions our life and the meaning of life. It is the foundation of a search. A lot of things haven't been answered in our life—and we are still searching for the questions. That questioning is buddha nature. It is a state of potential. The more dissatisfaction, more questions, and more doubts there are, the healthier it is, for we are no longer sucked into ego-oriented situations, but we are constantly woken up. We may feel that we are able to relax, let go, and take pleasure out of our life—but that becomes more and more momentary. We are woken up constantly by that unrest. Whether we are in a greater dramatic situation or a smaller petty situation, that same pattern goes on.

The beginning point of buddha nature seems to be the development of *maitri,* which could be translated as "love," "kindness," or "a friendly attitude." Having a friendly attitude means that when you make friends with someone, you accept the neurosis of that friend as well as the sanity of that friend. You accept both extremes of your friend's basic makeup as resources for friendship. If you make friends with someone because

you only like certain parts of that friend, then it is not complete friendship, but partial friendship. So maitri is *all-encompassing* friendship, friendship which relates with the creativity as well as the destructiveness of nature.

Maitri is not only maitri toward others, but it is also maitri toward ourselves. In fact, the first step of awakening buddha nature is friendship with ourselves. This tends to help a great deal. We don't have alternatives or sidetracks anymore, because we are satisfied with ourselves. We don't try to imitate anyone else because we hate ourselves and we would like to be like somebody else instead. We are on our own ground and we are our own resources. We might be fantasizing that there is a divine force or higher spiritual energy that might save us, but even that depends on our recognition that such a thing exists. Finally we end up just relating with ourselves. So friendship, or maitri, means the complete acceptance of our being.

The agitation of buddha nature coming through, questioning and dissatisfied, at the same time produces all kinds of insightful discoveries. We begin to settle down to our situation—not looking for alternatives at all, but just being with that. So the first step of the process of awakening buddha nature, embryonic enlightened mind, is trust in the heart, trust in ourselves. Such trust can only come about if there is no categorizing, no philosophizing, no moralizing, and no judgments. Instead there is a simple, direct relationship with our being.

One reason our being becomes workable is that we are constant people. We are completely, all the time, constant and predictable. We are predictable in the sense that there is a continual upsurge of energy and a continual upsurge of wanting: wanting to change, wanting to grasp, wanting to find out the details of life, wanting to seek pleasure. That happens constantly, and that constant unrest and energy could be regarded as a stepping-stone. We could work with that.

We might feel that we go through ups and downs: we feel highly excited and good and then we feel terribly depressed and shaky. But whatever we might be going through, we are still in the same situation all the time. We are constantly questioning, doubting, looking from this angle, looking from that angle, looking from a slight distance or from completely close up. All those games that go on are not regarded as bad, particularly, at all. Rather, they are expressions of our agitated enlightened mind trying to foment a revolution. Our agitated enlightened mind

is trying to throw off the seeming expressions of ego. As long as we are able to relate with that as workable—and very real, in fact—then there is tremendous potential in us. We could make friends with ourselves. We could develop maitri.

Having managed to do such a thing, we could begin to relate with others. We could relate with our father and our mother, the people who taught us how to walk, how to talk, how to behave. We could relate with our friends and we could relate with our enemies. We could relate with people who taught us the unpleasantness of life as well as the people who taught us how pleasant life is. We feel that we have inherited so much from the people around us right from childhood.

If we develop friendliness to ourselves, we could extend that friendliness to others—in a sense it is others; nevertheless, it is *us* at the same time. It is a very dubious relationship: it is not exactly the *other* other, but the *seemingly* other, which constantly bounces back on us. So extending to others is predominantly and basically a way of making friends with ourselves. Obviously, our father, mother, brother, sister, friends, and enemies have done their best to relate with us. We have become their product in some sense. But their product, *their* other, means *us* at the same time.

Expanding maitri cuts the neurosis of wishful thinking, the idea that you should be a good person only. Maitri is *intelligent* friendliness that allows acceptance of your whole being. It doesn't exclude friend or enemy, father or mother. It does not matter whether you regard your father as a friend and your mother as an enemy, your brother as a friend and your sister as an enemy, your friend as a friend, your friend as an enemy, or your enemy as a friend. The whole situation becomes extraordinarily spacious and is suddenly workable. Maybe there is hope after all.

It is tremendously delightful that you could make friends with your parents and yourself, make friends with your enemies and yourself. At the same time, creativity still goes on. Something is beginning to break through. It is actually becoming real rather than imaginary. It is real because we don't have any hypothesis about how a good person should be or how we should improve ourselves. It is no longer hypothetical—it is real. Something actually does exist: relationships exist; love and hate exist. Because they exist, we are able to work with them as steppingstones.

We begin to feel that we can afford to expand, that we can let go

without protecting ourselves. We have developed enough maitri toward ourselves that we are no longer threatened by being open. At that point, we are inspired to spirituality. In this case, the idea of spirituality is nothing religious or sacred; it is purely relating to something beyond ourselves. Spirituality is relating to something beyond the simple level of me and my pen, me and my relatives, me and my friends. It is going slightly beyond that. We can go beyond the limitations of our familiarities. We see that there are further areas to explore. That becomes important—prominent, in fact.

This is the level where we begin to relate with the "spiritual friend," or kalyanamitra. In other words, unless the fortifications of home ground have been broken down, we can't relate with the spiritual friend at all. The spiritual friend is somebody else, some other person quite different from our parents, relatives, or friends. He or she is the epitome of a foreigner. The spiritual friend is not our father, not our mother, not our friend. He represents what is outside of home ground—an entirely new area, a new perspective.

At the beginning, the idea of relating with such a person may be rather frightening. We prefer to come back home and relate with our own people, those whom we are used to having relationships with. That feels very safe—and this idea seems a bit dubious, uncertain. Nevertheless, there is inspiration; and that inspiration is constantly expanding. The radiation of maitri is still happening, so we can't just keep holding on to incestuous and stagnant relationships, alternating from father to friend, friend to enemy. That becomes a bit too localized, too simplified. Instead, we develop the tendency to explore a greater area. In fact, that is precisely what *mahayana* means: it is the "great vehicle," encompassing a greater area and a sense of exploration.

At this point an odyssey begins to take place. Although we don't want to, we still can't keep ourselves from relating with the kalyanamitra. We finally begin to make the right mistake; we fall into the right accident. We feel uncomfortable, but at the same time it is so tempting that we *have* to step out of our old realm and get into a new approach, a new perspective. We cannot help it. We feel that we are being very naughty, but we can't help it. We can't help being naughty. Our people, our friends, might say, "Don't talk to those foreigners, we don't know about *them,* they could be dangerous." But we still want to find out more about

those foreigners, for the very reason that they think differently, they behave differently, and their style is outlandish and fascinating.

The reason we refer to such a person as a spiritual friend rather than a guru is because the popular idea of a guru is of a person who possesses spiritual power and insight and is omniscient and wise. A guru is someone who has enormous understanding about life in the world and of reality and also has tremendous power and skill. A guru could cause the world to turn against us if we were on the wrong side of that person—in contrast, we ourselves feel embarrassingly small and stupid, undignified and frivolous.

Feeling so small ourselves and being in the presence of such a large situation is so threatening. Even if we have received spiritual instructions from such a guru, we still feel uncertain as to how to handle that message. We feel so unaccommodating, so poverty-stricken, that we couldn't possibly digest it. We can't even hold it in our hands. Our vision is so limited, our hearing is so limited, our brains are so small and inadequate, that we feel that we can't do anything. We might try, but it still feels as if nothing is really communicated. It is like a flea trying to study with an elephant and one day trying to become one. That seems to be the wrong notion of guru. That idea of guru is a myth.

The right approach, according to Shantideva, Gampopa, and Buddha, is that a spiritual friend, or kalyanamitra, is much more powerful than a hierarchical guru. A kalyanamitra brings a sense of friendship. The spiritual friend is extending friendship to you as you have done already. You have made friends with yourself; you have prepared yourself to search for a spiritual friend—and you find somebody who is the spokesman of the world outside your home ground. You can work with him and talk to him. He speaks your language. That person is a human being, a full-fledged human being. He needs food to sustain himself, he needs to take a rest at night, he gets up in the day, has breakfast as we do, lunch as we do, dinner as we do, wears clothes and breathes like we do. The spiritual friend is a human being.

One of the attributes of Buddha is that he is referred to as the supreme being among men. Literally, the text says, "the supreme being among two negative ones"—which is referring to humans rather than birds. The Buddha is never referred to as a heavenly being outside of this world. He is referred to as the teacher of human beings, a leader of men. He is a man himself—but he is an extraordinary one, a healthy one.

Nevertheless, we can still communicate. So the spiritual friend is not a person who undermines our existence and our neurosis, but a person who speaks the same neurotic language we speak. He or she is an extraordinarily adaptable person. It is workable to relate with such a person.

The spiritual friend represents the dharma, "the teachings," the message of enlightenment. By judging this particular person we find that enlightenment may not be as far out as we had imagined. This person is a spokesman, soaked in this particular awake state of being himself, yet he speaks and behaves as we do. He has something to teach us, and he seems to be friendly as well—although at the beginning we may still be suspicious. That is the meaning of spiritual friend: you are working with a human being, the son or daughter of a human.

Relating with such a spiritual friend is our first introduction to the realization that our adventure is not a bad one after all. The spiritual friend does not speak our petty domestic language—but in a very strange combination he is able to speak our language while at the same time not being wrapped up in the things that we usually get wrapped up in ourselves. It is a very strange kind of performance. You could almost call it magic: being a human being and not being caught up in the pettiness. It's an extraordinary thing.

We often wonder whether somebody doing that is an accomplished actor. Maybe it is our own fantasy. Maybe we are seeing somebody we want to see, but it is not actually happening. Those thoughts flicker in our minds naturally. I don't see anything wrong with that at all. Such things are necessary. They give us a break from the heavy-handedness of our spiritual friend. We have a little snack, a little break, an intermission—which is good. We don't expect to be heavy-handed ourselves or transform ourselves completely.

According to the scriptures and my own personal experience, a kalyanamitra, or spiritual friend, is a good person, good and trustworthy; and relating with a spiritual friend is a trustworthy situation. It is trustworthy because whenever there is doubt or fear, the spiritual friend does not try to justify himself, but bounces that back on you to remind you to awaken buddha nature. The spiritual friend is a very powerful mirror—a mirror that can reflect back your own reflection with super-clarity to the point of irritation. Even if you try to escape from that embarrassing encounter, that notion of escape is also recorded. It bounces back on you

as well, so you can't get out of it. You find yourself on the path in an encounter with a spiritual friend who will let you escape—but that escape itself becomes another encounter.

The spiritual friend can perform miracles purely by working with the ordinariness of life. It is nothing fabulous or magical, but a question of how much one is involved with the ordinariness of life. You would be surprised how much magic there is if one is being completely ordinary, if one is thoroughly and fully experiencing the highest quality of ordinariness or simplicity of life. While you are taking off into some fantasy, which you think is your ground—when you think that you have your ground already set up—that person who is at the ordinary level pops us. At the beginning you think it is a miracle, that somebody has conjured up chaos. But in fact it is not a miracle in terms of magic; it is a miracle in that self-existing energy has been connected. The spiritual friend is very powerful because he or she has direct access to the ordinariness of life, nothing fanciful.

Relating with the spiritual friend brings us out from our home ground of seemingly domesticated maitri to the level of compassion, or karuna. That seems to be the turning point of commitment to the teachings and to the agent of the teachings, who is the spiritual friend. The teaching is not a myth anymore; it is real, livable, workable, and pragmatic. At the same time, the intelligence of our buddha nature begins to function.

Discussion

Sitting Practice and Maitri

Student: It seems that sitting practice exercises maitri, that it gives us room. I have been following my breath, sort of shutting out the chaos, but I'm a little confused about this.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche: Shutting out chaos is necessary at the beginning. Then, when you let go of the technique, you find that you have more space than you imagined. So the technique creates a situation, rather than the technique being valid in itself. It is like dropping your crutches—you begin to bounce. The idea of technique is to accentuate whatever comes afterward.

Maitri and Self-Acceptance

S: How does one develop maitri and really accept oneself?

CTR: When you talk about *how* to do it, you are asking for a technique that won't bring you into an uncomfortable situation but at the same time will achieve what you want to achieve. Instead of using your hands, you want to use some machine, a pair of pliers or gloves. You are not willing to relate with things directly. So it seems that there is no *how* to do it, you have to *push* yourself. If you are pushed into the water, it may create a situation of panic—but, at the same time, you automatically swim.

S: How does one relate to the spiritual friend when one cannot accept friendship with oneself or one's family?

CTR: The relationship with the spiritual friend demands a relationship with yourself, so it works two ways at once. You have to learn to relate with yourself, because the spiritual friend is trying to make sure that you have no other choice. The heavy-handedness of the spiritual friend is also bouncing back a mirror reflection on you, so you are also your friend, as well as the spiritual friend being your friend. Also, if you have a relationship with a spiritual friend, that automatically means that you have done some work already; otherwise you wouldn't look for such a person at all. That must mean there's something going on inside you.

Buddha Nature and Searching

S: You said that buddha nature is not a peaceful state, that it's still searching for questions. That kind of confused me.

CTR: In describing buddha nature, I used the analogy of a revolutionary who is trying to throw off the expressions of ego. So ego is still there, of course. A revolutionary might act as if there's no authority, but he still has to fight with the authorities. As long as buddha nature is "nature," or garbha, it has to try to break out. The function of buddha nature is breaking out of the shell.

Buddha nature has cognitive mind, because it is "nature"; it is imprisoned within boundaries. So cognitive mind is buddha nature. In other words, you cannot have a revolution in a country if there is no suppressor. Suppression and revolution work together as an integral situation. It is like Mao Tse-tung's theory that you have to have a cultural revolution

repeating every ten years or so to make sure that things are refreshed. Without any person to attack, you can't renew your revolution. This is an interesting point of tension, that an upsurge needs suppression. That's exactly the job of buddha nature, seemingly.

Transcending Struggle

S: Does the bodhisattva transcend the whole struggle of samsara and nirvana?

CTR: There are ten stages of the bodhisattva path, and each stage is a struggle, so I don't think the bodhisattva transcends struggle. You can't get rid of struggle at the start; you need struggle, otherwise there's no journey.

FOUR

Sudden Glimpse

THE WHOLE APPROACH of loving-kindness, or maitri, is one of expanding. We are taking steps outward instead of internalizing, or developing maitri in ourselves alone. This is a crucial point in the bodhisattva path and the philosophy of mahayana altogether. Mahayana is a way of expanding, and the spiritual friend acts as the entrance to that journey. Having made a relationship with a spiritual friend already, that suggests that we relate not only with that one friend alone, but with many friends. There are friends everywhere, either seemingly threatening or seemingly attractive.

In bodhisattva language, the definition of *friend* is the idea of a guest. There is a phrase, "inviting all sentient beings as your guests." An interesting point about the word *guest* is that when we invite a guest we have a sense of the importance of the relationship. We wouldn't invite a guest unless that guest brought some highlight, some important friendship or exchange of hospitality. Guests are usually fed specially cooked food and receive special hospitality. The life of a bodhisattva is relating with *all* sentient beings as guests. He or she is inviting everyone as a guest, constantly offering a feast.

Inviting all sentient beings as our guests is the starting point of the application of compassion. In viewing sentient beings as guests, the bodhisattva has a constant sense of the impermanence of the relationship—not that the guest is going to turn into an enemy, but that the guest is going to leave. So we view this as an opportune time, and there is constant appreciation. We don't want to seduce our guests into our territory

and hold them with us for our benefit, nor do we want to go along with our guests when they leave our home in order to ease our loneliness. We don't take a journey with our guests; we stay at home.

Our guests come. We entertain them and relate with them. Afterward the guests thank us, we say good-bye, and we go back to running our home. There is a sense of the preciousness and the impermanence of the relationship, a sense of that relationship being extremely special. Our guest may be our husband, our wife, or our child—everybody is the guest of everybody. Although nobody completely lives up to his credentials, on a day-to-day level each relationship is based on relating with one's guests constantly.

Compassion is a combination of maitri and generosity. It is a journey outward, communication. On one level, compassion is feeling friendly toward ourselves. On another level, it is experiencing a sense of richness, that we can expand that warmth toward ourselves to other sentient beings. Compassion, from this point of view, is quite different from sympathy. Sympathy involves looking down on someone with the attitude, "I am in a secure situation, but you couldn't live at my level, so you need to be helped. You should be raised up to my level, helpless little person." Unlike sympathy, compassion is the radiation of mutual warmth to ourselves and to others.

We could look into the details of the nature of compassion, that sense of communication, how we *feel* compassionate. It is said in the scriptures that as fish cannot live without water, likewise compassion cannot develop without egolessness, without the experience of emptiness, or shunyata. That may bring up the idea that compassion is quite abstract, a logical conclusion of logical mind, rather than literal. It may seem that compassion is somewhat abstract because you just feel a sense of awareness. In fact, compassion is the heart of the practice of meditation in action.

We feel the presence of compassion as a sudden glimpse, a sense of clarity and warmth simultaneously. That is the notion of *recollection,* the awareness we might experience after intense sitting meditation practice. During the sitting practice of meditation, we find ourselves completely chaotic. All kinds of things are going on, and we try to swim through those overcrowded situations of this and that, subconscious mind, discursive thoughts, and so on. Physically, sitting meditation is supposedly quiet and simple—psychologically, it is quite a nightmare. At the least it

is annoying and rather inconvenient. There's a sense of rediscovering hidden corners, uncovering all sorts of areas that we haven't discovered before. And when we try to solve all the problems that arise, that only creates further problems.

That is what we might find in sitting practice—and all of that is a result of holding on to definite ideas, a result of not having enough maitri and compassion, enough security and warmth. When we sit, we feel that we are attacking and dealing with problems. We are trying to get something out of it. However, when the sitting meditation is completed, when the gong rings and we decide to stop, we find that we are experiencing *better* meditation. At that point all those struggles have gone and all the chaos is dissolved. There is a sense of relief. It is as if we were entering into nirvana—and our *meditation* was a samsaric act.

At that moment there is an absence of struggle, a sense of warmth and freedom. If we deliberately try to create that, it is impossible. Instead we come upon it by accident. The crescendo created by sitting meditation practice brings that kind of release and freedom. The nature of awareness—the real meaning of *satipatthana,* or the practice of recollection—is that feeling of presence, that feeling of relief. At that point you could say that compassion and the shunyata experience are happening simultaneously.

In daily life we don't have to *create* the concept of letting go, of being free, or anything like that at all. We can just acknowledge the freedom that was already there—and just by the memory of it, just by the idea of it, there is a quick glimpse. A sudden glimpse. That sudden glimpse of awareness that occurs in everyday life becomes the act of compassion. We don't have to keep up with that or hold it for a long time. It is just a quick glimpse, which goes on always. It's almost a sense of experience without time to label anything, without time to feel good or bad or compassionate or empty or whatever. Just *that* happens—constantly. We could create that situation right now, at this very moment—a quick glimpse—just to see that there is awareness that is not watched or confirmed. Just awareness. A quick glimpse.

The scriptures talk about bodhisattvas who develop compassion and awareness instantly, at the same time. Even if such bodhisattvas are about to lose their awareness and go into the chaos of a samsaric situation, they can correct themselves in the process of doing so. It's like a healthy person with good balance who slips or skids: in the process of

slipping, he can correct himself without falling. The force of the slipping is used as a way of rebalancing. That doesn't require any mystical experience—it is just one look, then let go.

According to the scriptures, that glimpse, if you analyze it, takes one-sixtieth of a second. It is so fast and so sharp. The sharpness is the *intelligence* of the compassion. Compassion also means being open and communicable. It contains *warmth,* because you have the desire to do such a thing. We could split that one-sixtieth of a second into sixty parts, as in the analogy of sixty flower petals being suddenly punctured with a needle. If you look at that in slow motion, you first see the needle touching a petal; then penetrating through that petal; then, having completely penetrated, getting into the next petal; again you see it touching the petal, piercing through, and going on to the next. Likewise with compassion: first there is the sense of warmth, or maitri, in oneself; then there is a sense of cutting neurosis; and finally, there is a sense of openness. So the whole thing falls into three parts. It's very quick!

The whole thing is very abrupt. That's why what is known as the postmeditation experience, or meditation in action, is regarded as a highly powerful thing. There is no time to analyze; no time to work with it or hold on. At the same time there is a gap. In other words, there is no time to refer back to oneself as "I am doing this." There is no time to relate with *me* or ego awareness at all. It is just *awareness,* simple awareness. That awareness is regarded as the heart of meditation in action. It is compassion.

A person might develop the patience to repeat that many times in a day. By doing so, that glimpse of compassion and shunyata cuts the chain reaction of karmic causal characteristics. At the same time, you are communicating fully and completely. When the penetrating is going on, when the puncturing is going through, when you are cutting the chain—you are catching a quick glimpse of buddha nature at the same time. If that act is divided into three sections, first there is maitri, trusting in the heart; second, there is a gap in which you experience the openness of tathagatagarbha, or buddha nature; third, there is a sense of communication in that, having already woken up at that level, there is a sense of freedom to expand and to relate with your actions, whatever you are doing. That seems to be how to develop compassion. The problem is that if we begin to hold on to that, or begin to analyze it, then the analytical mind begins to pollute the freshness of that sudden glimpse.

In a sense, we don't have to develop compassion. We simply acknowledge a situation that is already there: we are just seeing it, looking at it. One of the analogies used in the text *Entering a Path of Enlightenment,* or the *Bodhicharyavatara,* is that of seeing a picture of the Buddha. If a person in a state of rage sees a picture of the Buddha painted on the wall, the merit of seeing a picture of the Buddha is not wasted. In reference to the idea of compassion, when we see a picture of the Buddha, it has all kinds of associations, such as the idea of friendliness. Seeing that compassionate Buddha creates a sudden glimpse in our mind, which cuts through the rage and aggression. It might not cut through completely or ideally. We may not just flop like a punctured balloon—that would be expecting magic. But at least it de-intensifies the pressure of neurotic speed.

Compassion also brings a sense of communication with other people. You are constantly relating with other people in everyday-life situations, not only when you have developed a state of extreme emotional upheaval. That awareness constantly flashing again and again produces friendliness. In other words, subconsciously you begin to realize that you are no longer as vulnerable as you thought you were. There is something going on behind the facade of emotions and protections, something going on behind that whole thing. Subconsciously or consciously you begin to develop a sense of confidence, that you can afford to be openhearted. You can afford to invite all those guests into your territory and work with them, entertain them.

Compassion is not only the logical conclusion that you are going to be okay. It is almost a subconscious trick, you might call it, to deliberately create that sudden glimpse constantly. Looking back or looking forward, there is openness. Seemingly, such looking destroys the ground of ego—but surprisingly, that doesn't become a state of loss or a state of shock from the point of view of ego. Instead, it becomes something fundamentally sane, fundamentally workable and smooth.

This type of compassion is what bodhisattvas practice, and it seems that we can get into it ourselves. We can do so very simply—as long as we don't try to re-create past experiences or future expectations of the glimpse, but just look. Look! Look! The idea of compassion is direct. We might realize that the idea of becoming enlightened beings one day is not very far ahead, if we are not enlightened already. It becomes very real and very direct—it ceases to be a dream.

As that basic ground of compassion is set on the path, then magically, I suppose we could say, there is a sense of openness, almost ambition. It is ambition in the positive sense, that you would like to extend an invitation to your guests all the time. Gentleness becomes powerful. You are not afraid to cut down, and you are not subject to idiot compassion anymore at all.

Fundamentally, the pressure of ego's speed is what causes aggression and stupidity, because you don't have a chance to examine anything when you are carried away by such great speed. As you drive yourself along through this speed, you collect all kinds of garbage, which is passion. This sudden flash of compassion cuts that speed, or at least slows it down. Somebody had to decide to puncture your car tire—which is *you!* As a result, you collect less dust, less garbage, on your woolly tail. The whole situation becomes more spacious and workable.

This applies not only to us as individuals personally, but it expands to working with other people as well. For instance, you might develop a sense that you want to help somebody. You feel very bad about someone and you want to help. You feel so excited about helping that person that you become very ambitious about that particular project. You want to make a clean sweep, create a new person; but your style is so ambitious, so speedy, that you fail to realize the details of what kind of help that person actually needs.

From the point of view of that person, you become a clown pretending to help him; there is no respect—and from your point of view, there is no time. You want to make a clean sweep, but instead you only create a thicker skin for that person, who begins to see through you and your speed. Seemingly you are acting in the name of compassion, but there is no room to be compassionate. So, in fact, it is an uncompassionate act. There is no time taken, and no patience. That kind of situation can be saved by a sudden glimpse, through looking. Such looking, such a compassionate glimpse, becomes extremely powerful, naturally workable.

Discussion

Idiot Compassion

Student: Could you briefly describe idiot compassion?

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche: Idiot compassion is the highly conceptual-

ized idea that you want to do good to somebody. At this point, good is purely related with pleasure. For instance, somebody might say that a person needs an operation, and you defend him from the operation, saying, "He's sick already so why do we have to cut his body? We don't want to hurt him." But that is very primitive: we are trying to cure him, not destroy him. Idiot compassion also stems from not having enough courage to say no. Saying no means saying yes in the long run, but you are afraid to say that. It's like what often happens in Mexico and India. When you ask people the way, they don't want to say no to you; instead they say, "Yes, yes. It's very close. You turn right and turn right again and you'll be there." They don't say, "I don't know." That's a primitive form of idiot compassion.

Abrupt Awareness

S: I'm getting the sense that one should try to open oneself and be fully compassionate at least three times a day.

CTR: The idea of opening yourself is quite different from the primitive approach of repeating God's name or thinking higher thoughts a few times a day. It is abrupt awareness, awareness which looks at yourself. It doesn't have to be strategized, but it is abrupt, a glimpse. Krishnamurti referred to this experience as "choiceless awareness." You don't have to choose it—it comes to you. However, it seems that it is not as simple as that. You have to make some effort to decide to look, but not hold on to it.

S: Rinpoche, when you were analyzing this sudden glimpse the first time, you said that it has three stages: the first is warmth, or maitri; the second is cutting through neurosis; and the third is openness. Then a little later you went through it again and you gave the three stages slightly differently: the first as maitri; the second as gap or openness, tathagatagarbha; and the third as communication.

CTR: Piercing the chain of karma is regarded as creating a hole, so to speak, creating a gap, which is openness. But at the same time communication is also a form of openness. It is openness in the sense of not just creating a gap between you and your neighbor but going out toward it, which is saying the same thing.

S: Is the transition between the stages automatic?

CTR: At this point it is almost useless to talk about three stages, be-

cause the glimpse is so quick and so sudden that there is no point in taking notice of it. There is no point in analyzing it. The nature of the experience is that it does have those three stages. But it's not especially important to take notice of them. It just happens.

S: It seems possible that the awareness of the open space might be so attractive that you would want to stay there.

CTR: At that point you have to be able to give up. You have to deliberately push the experience away, disown it. That is extremely important. Otherwise you kill the whole thing. I mean, this glimpse is very simple. Just look! That's it. There's no problem with that.

S: Are we cognizant of the glimpse?

CTR: You are aware at the beginning and at the end, obviously. When somebody takes your photograph with a flashbulb, as it flashes you don't think, "Now my photograph is being taken"; you are just dazzled by the flash. *After*, you say, "Now my photograph has been taken"; and *before*, you say, "My photograph *will* be taken." But that is okay; we can't start perfectly.

Recollection and the Sudden Glimpse

S: Earlier you said that you just had to recall the idea, but later on you said that you can't use the past to try to re-create the glimpse.

CTR: The point is that you have a recollection that such a situation exists. Then you look, but you don't hold on to it. Rather than trying to re-create the experience you had yesterday, thinking it was a better flash than today's flash, recollection is a boundary, an outline. Deliberate action exists only at the boundary. Once you are *inside* the boundary, there is no point in making *further* boundaries. In fact, you can't—it is so quick. Before you even think you have made a boundary, you have lost it already. You haven't lost it, but it has passed away. It is very sudden.

S: It seems to me that it is so fast that it almost has a foolproofness to it; it's so fast you couldn't do it wrong.

CTR: That's the whole point. You can only go wrong at the beginning, by preparing too much. In that case your flash would be a very clumsy one. Actually, you are fooling yourself, you are not flashing. And at the end, you may congratulate yourself, trying to hang on to the tail of it.

Vicious Circles

S: When neurotic patterns get set up between people, they often become a vicious circle. All you have to do is cut that circle at one point, because once the circle is cut, there's a way out.

CTR: Once you cut the circle at one point, there is a possibility of setting chaos to the whole circle. But you still have memories of the circle, so you will still go on. The way out has to be repeated many times. The circle has to be sliced thoroughly all over.

Idiot Compassion

S: Talking about idiot compassion, you were saying that you should *not* do everything for everybody. But Shantideva said he would do everything for everybody, more or less.

CTR: Of course you should do everything for everybody; there is no selection involved at all. But that doesn't mean to say that you have to be gentle all the time. Your gentleness could have heart, strength. In order that your compassion doesn't become idiot compassion, you have to use your intelligence. Otherwise, there could be the self-indulgence of thinking that you are creating a compassionate situation when in fact you are feeding the other person's aggression. If you go to a shop and the shopkeeper cheats you, and you go back and let him cheat you again, that doesn't seem to be a very healthy thing to do for others.

Helping People

S: Is it better not to help people if you are in a speeded-up state and you don't have the awareness and the gap? Is it better to do nothing at all? Or is it possible that the gap can be created in the process of helping people?

CTR: That's it. You try to create a gap as you are helping people. You shouldn't give up.

S: You shouldn't go away and prepare yourself?

CTR: Everything happens on the spot, so there really is nothing to prepare. In any given situation, as things are exposed to you, the preparation and skillful means happen simultaneously.

Sudden Relaxation

S: When you reach a climax of hope and fear, there's a sudden relaxation. There's a really vivid moment of intense relaxation and emptiness. You are only likely to stay in it for a couple of seconds. Although it is very dramatic, it might last only for a few moments, like a flash in sitting. Is that the kind of experience you are talking about?

CTR: I think so, yes. It happens with any kind of clarity. The experience of clarity might last for half a day or half an hour, but you can't repeat it. That sudden glimpse is an aspect of clarity. It has a similar quality to the sudden glimpse of compassion.

S: Within the experience of clarity, are there gaps between the moments of clarity, or is it one whole thing?

CTR: It is one sudden thing you can't define. The scriptures talk about touching and penetrating and releasing compassion, but that almost becomes a myth because it happens so fast.

S: Is the time between glimpses a state of pure hell?

CTR: Whatever you would like to call it. It is *this.*

S: Would you say that the glimpse is stepping out of the whole wheel of life?

CTR: Not necessarily. The glimpse is just cutting the umbilical cord. Just that. Seeing the no-man's-land.

S: If you don't let go of the experience, I suppose that would make everything worse afterward. You would be struggling to get back there.

CTR: Yes, very much so. Then the experience becomes a trip. You keep trying to get higher and higher, better and better. Quite possibly we could categorize this by serial numbers—glimpse one, glimpse two, glimpse zero—which becomes a big trip.

Dhyana States

S: How does this relate to the levels of absorption, or dhyanas, in hinayana?

CTR: The dhyana states are less abrupt—they are different intensities of rest. There is no flash of clarity, simply a kind of absorption. It's like being concerned with whether you had a good sleep, a bad sleep, or a relatively good one. The sudden glimpse cuts through those absorptions

as well. So there are two levels: developing the experience of the realm of the gods, which is the dhyana states, and transcending the dhyana states, which is the development of wisdom. According to Buddhism, wisdom transcends the god realm. From this point of view, it is nirvana experience, rather than samsaric experience.

FIVE

Leap of Confidence

SO FAR, WE HAVE NOT studied the bodhisattva path thoroughly; we have just had a preliminary glimpse of the bodhisattva path. We have an idea of the basic psychology of the bodhisattva, or the bodhisattva's mentality, and how one develops it. Now we could discuss the idea of commitment to the bodhisattva path and the bodhisattva vow.[1]

The bodhisattva's mentality consists of two aspects. The first aspect is the *general meditative state of mind,* the awareness or glimpse that we discussed in chapter 4. That is referred to as the absolute aspect. The second, or relative, aspect is *the actual application of this in our day-to-day life.* So the commitment of a person's whole being to the bodhisattva path involves not only a commitment to the basic sanity of the bodhisattva, but also the commitment not only to contemplative practice, but to working with situations that require decisions and the function of discursive thoughts to make the right decisions.

Joining the bodhisattva path is not by faith alone—there should be a sense of conviction and intelligence, almost to the level of intellect. It is important to be able to sort things out, to distinguish between skillful means and unskillful means. You need to know how to work with situations, how to handle them. If you regard the bodhisattva path as purely following some preexisting law, with headlines of this and that, unless you know the bodhisattva's bible by heart, you cannot keep track of all

1. This talk was given after the bodhisattva vow ceremony. The text for the bodhisattva vow is included as the appendix, beginning on page 433.

that. But if you begin to see the bodhisattva path as an existing feeling or basic understanding, you realize that skillful means is not based on prescriptions in books but on prescriptions given by your own innate nature or basic understanding.

Having taken the bodhisattva vow and committed yourself to the bodhisattva path, there's a tremendous sense of excitement. You want to do everything and handle every situation extraordinarily. You feel that you could save people on the spot, that you could help people by sacrificing your next meal or your next nap. But that doesn't seem to be quite enough. In fact, quite possibly, if you do not take care of your own body and energy, your bodhisattva action will become very sloppy and tedious as a result of your being too tired. You have been putting too much energy into working with other people without regard to your own basic health. So the bodhisattva's skillful means does not only go outward; it also involves tremendous concern for one's own body, one's own basic being. There is a sense of responsibility in all directions.

The sense of excitement can be an obstacle on the bodhisattva path. You feel so excited that you want to convert everybody to your trip. You would like to make everyone a replica of yourself. This is one of the first big mistakes that an adolescent bodhisattva can make. There is so much inspiration, so much energy, that you begin to feel that you could conquer the whole world. There is so much conviction that the bodhisattva could be blinded by it. You are not able to see the situation beyond that emotional conviction and sense of excitement.

At the same time, that conviction should be nursed. The idea is not just to play it safe. Security is not in question, particularly. What is lacking in that approach is vision. Your vision is limited; you are unable to see. Rather than developing the panoramic vision to see how the whole thing works, you are purely interested in converting other people to the bodhisattva path. But in the bodhisattva path there is a sense of totality. There is *comprehensive* vision, seeing what needs to be done in the present situation, but at the same time, not being rushed into it. There is a sense of experiencing what comes next, an emphasis on the future and on creating the right atmosphere or working base for that. It is about relating with other people.

The question is whether or not the bodhisattva's attitude is involved with the ambition of ego. Even if the bodhisattva's ego is associated with enlightenment, it is still ego; so it is subject to spiritual materialism. On

the bodhisattva path there is a sense of giving away and destroying your ambition at the same time as you are building your inspiration. That is one of the basic points of skillful means: you have enough power to exert your energy, but at the same time you have enough gentleness to change your decisions to suit the given situation.

The bodhisattva's approach is a gentle but powerful effort, which is based on prajna. Here prajna involves both skillful means and knowledge. Developing basic prajna is almost like becoming an enlightened politician. You are aware of the surrounding situation, but at the same time you are also aware of your version of it. So you don't just give in to what is happening, but your version has something to do with it as well. Every corner has been seen with the skillful means of the bodhisattva approach.

Texts such as *Forty-six Ways in Which a Bodhisattva Fails*,[2] which describe the bodhisattva discipline, talk about not presenting the dharma if the listener is uninterested; not associating with heretics; and not refusing an invitation to teach. All those guidelines, if you look at them very generally, may seem to be illogical and confusing. But once you begin to look at them as they apply to real, definite situations, you can see that they have a logical working basis. When there is a pull toward ego, that could be cut. When there is hesitation to step outside of ego, to loosen one's grip, one could let loose and go. When there is hesitation about not being able to make a correct decision, one could push oneself into the situation so that the direction comes about naturally.

Skillful means, from the point of view of prajna mentality, could be said to be slightly paranoid or fearful of consequences. This is a product of egolessness, because if you have nothing, if there is no project to achieve, if you are not drawing things in your direction, then there is a sense of ambition. That empty-heartedness could be said to be paranoid. At the same time, there is the inspiration to deal with situations perfectly and directly. So there is also a sense of pride. This is not pride in the pejorative sense, but pride in the sense of clear perception—seeing what needs to be done, what should be fulfilled. So the bodhisattva mentality

2. A traditional text on the many ways a bodhisattva may fail to practice the six paramitas, translated by the Nālandā Translation Committee, can be found in the book *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness* by Chögyam Trungpa (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1993), which is reprinted in this volume (see p. 223).

of skillful means consists of a sense of ambition and also a sense of tentativeness. Tentativeness means allowing suggestions to come to you from outside, so that you can utilize situations. You are not afraid to do so, because that whole process is one's basic inspiration.

There seems to be a tremendous subtlety of perception in the bodhisattva path. That subtlety comes from a sense of basic warmth, a compassionate mentality, along with the shunyata mentality of openness—compassion and openness operating simultaneously. It seems to be extremely difficult to develop that just by magic. We cannot develop it by doing some unrelated technique like standing on our heads or reciting certain formulas that supposedly provide sympathetic vibrations toward that practice. According to the bodhisattva's way, we have to get into it—we have to *do it!* It is as if we had all those faculties such as generosity, patience, discipline, energy, meditation, and knowledge already in us. On the whole, some kind of leap seems to be necessary—leap in the sense of developing basic confidence. We might feel that we are inadequate, but nevertheless we pretend we can do it. We push ourselves into that situation. It is similar to taking the bodhisattva vow. There is tremendous pretense involved. We are uncertain whether we are able to tread the bodhisattva's path or not, but we still decide to do it. This confidence is known as *pranidhana,* which means "vision."

Fundamentally there is hope. There is space for vision, space where vision could be worked through and distributed. Looking back and looking to the future are equally necessary, particularly in actually practicing the bodhisattva's way in day-to-day living. There is a sense of fearlessness, that there is a solid working basis. We don't have to shy away from what is happening, and, at the same time, we don't have to exaggerate it either. We could just accept the given situation and work with it directly and simply as it happens.

Discussion

Saving Sentient Beings

Student: The bodhisattva has committed himself to save all sentient beings, yet he himself is a sentient being. How is he different?

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche: The bodhisattva has vision. He is already inspired, whereas, the others are not—so he has to work with them. As

far as he is concerned, his salvation is there already; he doesn't particularly have to cultivate it. What he has to cultivate is working with others who might lack his openness.

Overextending

S: Rinpoche, you said that a bodhisattva should take care of his body and energy in order not to overextend himself. How can he do that without living a self-centered life?

CTR: I think that comes naturally. A bodhisattva has a natural sense of the limits of his own physical strength. A bodhisattva wouldn't punish himself or say, "That's just my imagination, my comfort-oriented trip." The difference between impulse and a real need would be quite obvious.

Taking the Bodhisattva Vow for the Wrong Reasons

S: Could there be a problem if a person wants to take the bodhisattva vow for the wrong reasons?

CTR: That's possible.

S: In a situation like that, would it make sense to leap over the uncertainty, or would that be a further obstacle and just add to the confusion?

CTR: If the bodhisattva has a wrong attitude, there will naturally be some chaos creating obstacles to his journey. Things won't fit together, things won't fall into a workable situation. Obviously, instead of giving away his ego-oriented ambition, he is working toward Rudrahood.

Surrendering Ego

S: You talked about the seriousness of deciding to make a leap. I'm wondering if it is possible, having made that leap, to realize you were wrong. If so, could you change directions at that point, or would it be better just to continue along as you are?

CTR: I don't think you can maneuver around it. You have to make a definite break, a fresh start. The problem is that you have not been able to surrender your ego. When you suddenly try to do so and get back to the right path, you cannot do it because there has been no basic generosity or surrendering. Sooner or later you have to be humiliated. Sooner

or later your ego has to be humiliated. You have to face that. That requires an operation, a big jump, a drastic change. It requires that you not continue to follow the process you are on, but acknowledge that it is not a very positive approach. It requires that you come back and change your mind.

SIX

Identifying with the Teachings

THE SKILLFUL MEANS of the bodhisattva extends to a sense of identifying with the practice. If there is no identification with the teachings and the practice of the bodhisattva—if a person has a purely intellectual relationship with the teachings and the hope that the spiritual friend may be able to guide him—there seems to be a discrepancy. The bodhisattva's way is one of tremendous identification with the dharma. The dharma is no longer regarded as simply following the books, the scriptures, or the doctrine—dharma is following one's own conviction. When such conviction has been awakened in the bodhisattva, the teachings become pure confirmation. That is a very important point.

If a person has not completely taken refuge in the dharma as a path and has not completely taken the vow in the way of the bodhisattva, there is still an impersonal attitude toward the teachings; so making a commitment is very complicated. In deciding whether you should commit yourself to the teachings or not, you are still thinking of it in terms of joining a club or society rather than as a real pursuit.

In relating with the teachings of the bodhisattva path, commitment means that a person has already surrendered the notion of intellectual speculation on the teachings. He or she has also surrendered the need for proof. So that person does not ask, "If I do this, what result am I going to gain?" He has given up such theorizing and searching for security. He has given up the need to know that what he is getting into is foolproof and really works. If you are buying a new gadget, there is no point in possessing that gadget if it doesn't work. But the bodhisattva's

way has nothing at all to do with purchasing anything or joining a club—it is simply commitment to the practice and to the teachings. That commitment comes from the individual rather than from any external reinforcement.

The bodhisattva's way of relating to the spiritual friend is similar, in that the spiritual friend is seen as the vanguard or spokesman of the teachings. As the bodhisattva works with the spiritual friend, he is also working with his own involvement and commitment to the teachings; so the spiritual friend and the teachings are complementary. Therefore, for the bodhisattva, making a definite decision to be involved with the spiritual friend is not a big deal, or the only hope he or she can latch on to. Neither is purely dealing with the teachings without the spiritual friend a big deal. They are complementary, both ways.

Basically, we could summarize the teachings of the bodhisattva path as a way of transcending aggression. You are working with aggression, and as you begin to work with aggression, that commitment becomes part of your practice. Doctrinal studies do not bring out your aggression, although doctrinal texts talk about how to deal with aggression; living life brings out aggression and speed. Leading your life automatically shows you how to relate with the complexities of your mental activities and emotions.

Identification with the teachings also means developing a sense of friendship with the doctrine. The teachings are regarded as a friendly message rather than reading a menu. When you read a menu, you develop a businesslike mentality. How much does it cost? Which is the most delicious food to order? You are rejecting one dish and ordering another dish. With a sense of friendliness toward the doctrine, or the dharma, you cannot pick and choose. It is a complete process. You can't say, "I prefer generosity rather than patience, so I'll have that." For that matter, you cannot reject the hinayana and only accept the mahayana. You must begin with hinayana and slowly proceed along to the mahayana. If you are able to do that, that is the real demonstration of identification with the teachings.

As we identify with the teachings, at the same time we can also identify with the teacher, or the spiritual friend. However, there is a certain kind of watcher, a certain aggression, which keeps us from identifying with the teachings. It includes, for one thing, the businesslike mentality of always asking, "Which is the safest and best thing to do? What is the

most efficient approach?" We watch ourselves developing or not developing, and when we get bored with what we are doing, we are always looking at possibilities of changing course. For instance, if we are bored with one class, we look into another class or another department.

There is also a sense of personal indignation, that you don't want to be reduced into a nonexistent person. Each time the penetrating words of the teachings begin to come through, you feel personally humiliated. To the extent that you did not know these things and somebody else did—that somebody else knew better than you—you are constantly challenged. There is a sense of competition. Connected with this is that you want to impress your friends, your students, and other people. You are looking for topics or subjects you can use to impress people. You wouldn't tell people, "I just read about this topic this morning," but you would talk about it as if you had known it for a long time. All those situations—such as the sense of indignation, the sense of wanting to impress other people, or the sense of wanting to choose the best one—pervert the teachings. They are based on failing to identify with the teachings.

In the hinayana path, you are pushed into disciplines and there are all kinds of recommendations. The way of identifying with the dharma is to regard the dharma as a whip. The truth of suffering is somewhat external: it pushes you like a whip behind a slave. In the mahayana, it is much more open than that. It is only by identifying with the teachings that you are inspired—that is what pushes you. You are not taking refuge in the dharma as something external or purely a command; the dharma is something you identify yourself with. If there is any discrepancy or any doubt—"Should I get into it? Should I jump into it or shouldn't I?"—that is a sign of being unable to identify with the teachings as the truth. The teachings are still regarded as taking out an insurance policy. It is still business mentality.

In the beginning of the bodhisattva path there is the development of maitri, making friends with oneself. Maitri is an experience. It is not that somebody is telling you how to make friends with yourself so you are pushed into it. That doesn't happen. Rather you find yourself making friends. You have to make friends with yourself and see the logic that you are good or bad not as praise or threat but as something you have to work on. You can work on yourself.

Finding a spiritual friend is also a way of involving yourself with the

teachings. The spiritual friend acts as a mirror reflection. Your doubts and hesitations are being thrown back at you, so you feel extremely threatened and confused. Your own private parts are exposed by the medium of the spiritual friend, in that mirror reflection. In that way, you develop further involvement with the teachings.

The development of compassion and the paramita practices of generosity, patience, discipline, and so forth, are also ways of involving yourself further with the teachings. Rather than being converted into this particular trip, there is a sense of constantly being challenged and having to get yourself involved. It is like eating and drinking. When you are hungry you eat food, when you are thirsty you drink water. It is not necessary that you believe or have faith in the food and water. You have a personal demand for food and water because food protects you from hunger, and water protects you from thirst. So you create the food and you create the water, rather than someone pushing you into eating and drinking. You feel a real need.

When you feel tired, you fall asleep—you feel your need to rest. Likewise with generosity, you feel your need to open more, so you get into being more generous. With discipline, you feel you need to put yourself in situations in which you can work with the details of life rather than frivolously ignoring the whole thing. So you get into discipline. Patience is also necessary, because without something to work with to develop patience, you feel constant boredom, constant loss of the substance of life. So you get into patience because you need to create further substance and solidity in your life. In regard to energy, working hard, you feel worn out. You feel used up by the sense of constant speed. Your energy has been lost, so you need to build it up—therefore you work hard, diligently.

Meditation is likewise. When your whole experience is scattered, with no structure, and your subconscious mind of discursive thoughts and emotions is shooting out all over the place, there is no focus, no paying attention. So you develop meditation—to simplify all those complications. With prajna, or knowledge, you begin to feel that you are so vague and diffused that there's no definite understanding of things as they are. Because there is tremendous vagueness, you need to develop prajna, knowledge.

None of these paramita practices are imposed on you. It is not that somebody says it is good for you to practice the paramitas although it is

painful. Paramita practice is something you feel you need. Paramita practice is like eating food when you are hungry, drinking water when you are thirsty, or resting when you are tired.

As long as we have awakened to the attitude of heroism of the bodhisattva's way, we are going to proceed along. We are not going to rest. Even when we do rest, it is part of our journey. If we are not walking but resting, that is only to regain further energy to walk. As long as there is a sense of ongoing process rather than wanting to stay in the snugness of self-indulgence of ego's neurosis, there is a constant journey taking place.

That constant journey demands certain requirements. Various skillful means are necessary. These skillful means come along as we feel we need them. On the whole this is the result of our commitment to the teachings. We feel one with the teachings as we feel one with our body. Because we feel one with our body, we feel what our body needs. Our body needs rest, shelter, clothing, food, drink. Similarly, because we feel one with the teachings, with all these skillful means and practices of the bodhisattva way, we feel intuitively what needs to be done. In other words, unless there is a sense of involvement with the teachings, complete identification with the teachings, whatever we try to do is like shooting an arrow in the dark. Most often it is ineffective, and it does not fulfill the demands we want to achieve.

On the whole we could say that the basic definition of the bodhisattva path is that sense of involvement and identification with the teachings. It is complete identification with the teachings and with life; complete identification with bodhisattva, with buddha nature, with the paramitas, and with the spiritual friend. There is something *real* about the whole thing. You are not afraid to get into it, to latch on to it.

Identification with the teachings is an important point of the bodhisattva path and the teachings of mahayana. It is not that you have to be smart so that you can choose which item is the best to have. At the same time, it is not based on blind faith either. Instead, you feel what you *need,* and you *involve* yourself in it. The mahayana is based on a sense of sympathy toward oneself, compassion toward oneself. If you don't relate with your body, with your basic being, so to speak, there is no sympathy to your being. Without sympathy, you would purely be involving yourself with a fantasy dream world, rather than actually experiencing what

needs to be done—which is a very intelligent act rather than an act of blind faith.

That seems to be the summary of mahayana practice: complete identification with the teachings. Bodhichitta is implanted in your heart. Therefore, you are the embodiment of bodhichitta, the awakened state of mind. Your creation, your being is bodhichitta. You are no longer dealing with foreign elements coming from outside; you are awakening your intelligence as you go along. Your intelligence becomes greater and greater, more and more powerful. It begins to eat through the skins of ego, the layers and layers of ego-manufactured walls and barriers. That's why the idea of *awake* rather than *saved* is important in the bodhisattva approach.

Discussion

Cynicism and Frivolity

Student: You have emphasized maintaining a cynical attitude. When we choose the bodhisattva path, do we give that up, or is giving that up blind faith?

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche: Giving up cynicism is blind faith. When you develop an intelligent attitude as to what you definitely need, the frivolity of what you may not need but you think you need could be stripped away by a cynical attitude. Once you identify with the teachings, you begin to know what would be best and what would be a frivolous thing to do. As you go along, there will be successive frivolous mentalities happening—and you could cut those down.

Pushing or Not Pushing

S: There seems to be a very strong desire to confirm the reality of the teachings, to have a glimpse that it actually happens. You want it to be true so much that the desire itself can become an obstacle. That desire could be an expression of the *lack* of faith in the teachings. So it could be an expression of faith in the teachings *not* to push on all the time.

CTR: Even if you decide not to push, you are still making a forward journey. It is like changing your car tire when you have a puncture. That is also a part of the journey you are going along. So it's the same thing.

Mirroring

S: Rinpoche, what is the difference between the way the sangha, the people we are living with, become mirrors to us and the way you represent a mirror to us?

CTR: I don't see any difference, particularly. In the case of your own friends, even if something reflects back on you, you may not believe that it is the real mirror. However, when you work with the teacher, you feel that the mirror must be a more profound one. But in actual fact, it is the same thing. It is a question of how much you are open to it.

S: When you are dealing with your friends, the question arises of your trips and their trips. It is different than with the spiritual friend, where you have the confidence to say, "It's *your* trip." You don't have to try to sort out this trip and that trip.

CTR: I think that's a matter of opinion, actually. It's like going to a surgeon who is your relative or going to a surgeon who has nothing to do with you. The surgeon who is your relative might have a personal concern about you, so he might make a mistake. So you go to somebody who is impersonal to you instead.

S: In dealing with our friends, it seems necessary to consider their trips in terms of the mirror reflection.

CTR: I suppose it's a question of what part is your version of them bouncing back on you and what part is really their true nature.

True Nature

S: Rinpoche, what do you mean by their true nature?

CTR: Their true nature is different from your version of them. The true nature of the other person may be an act of neurosis, of frivolousness, or whatever.

S: When you are relating to another person, is their true nature their buddha nature, or is their true nature the way they manifest themselves? Is their true nature what is there beyond their hostilities and aggression, or is their true nature just their trips? Is it the way they are, their style, their buddha nature, everything?

CTR: I think of true nature in terms of their neurosis as well as their insight. It's their basic being. In other words, you don't lay preconceptions on them. Therefore you could see their neurosis coming out of them as well as insight coming out of them—which is very hard to do.

S: So their true nature is where they are at at the time, which you can't possibly understand?

CTR: Quite possibly you can't—but there is a possibility that you might be able to do so.

Awareness and Vows

S: I feel that I need awareness in order to keep the refuge and bodhisattva vows, but I see that I'm not aware. There's always this haunting feeling that I'm not keeping the vows because I don't have the necessary awareness. Are you saying that I should have faith that this awareness will come?

CTR: You don't have to develop awareness, particularly. As long as you see that you are *not* aware, that in itself is awareness.

S: But that doesn't help me work with the bodhisattva path. There isn't any discrimination. I'm not aware enough to deal with situations.

CTR: If you realize that you aren't aware, that's the whole point. You don't have to catch yourself being aware all the time. You do not have to feel good or to feel that you are always a solid, balanced person—the idea is to catch yourself. You see that you are not aware, then you create a gap. That gap doesn't necessarily have to be a good one; it could be a quite horrific one. Nevertheless, that gap in itself becomes very helpful because you begin to see that you are not aware of it.

S: How does that help?

CTR: It begins to break the chain reaction of speed.

S: Does it let you become more aware after that?

CTR: That is awareness.

Feeling the Need to Practice

S: Rinpoche, you said that as you go along the bodhisattva path, you feel a real need for certain practices, like the paramita practices; so nothing is imposed on you. There seems to be a very fuzzy line in my head between an intellectual approach and the way needs appear in my mind. Things seem to be coming out of my mind, but I am not sure whether they are thoughts or the gap.

CTR: Once you begin to analyze the nature of need, you are treating yourself and the teachings impersonally. I mean, we don't have intellec-

tual hunger when we want to eat food; we have real hunger. We actually, physically need food. So there is no room for analyzing. The whole thing has to be very straightforward and very direct. It has to be abrupt.

Recognizing the Gap

S: Rinpoche, is recognizing the gap, the gap, or not recognizing it? Are you aware when it is taking place?

CTR: You do have some awareness when it is taking place. It is like when you suddenly fall down: you have some sense that you fell down. But then there is another kind of awareness, which is confirming that gap. That comes much later.

Hunger for Dharma

S: Rinpoche, where does hunger for the dharma come from? Does it come from something that happened in previous lives?

CTR: It is a very real thing. You feel that you are inadequate and you need further strength at that given moment—and you pick up on it. It's a very natural thing. Something is missing, and you want to fill the gap.

Identifying with the Teachings

S: Rinpoche, could you talk a bit more about complete identification with the teachings?

CTR: Identifying with the teachings means that the teachings are not regarded as belonging to the teacher alone, but they are also a part of you. That is precisely what is meant by the teachings being true. If they are true, basically, they should apply to you as well to the teacher. When there is a fire, the firemaker gets burned as well as the person watching the fire. So there is no *belonging,* as far as the teachings are concerned. They are not purely information, they exist as a living situation. So the teachings transcend doctrine. In this sense, the teachings have nothing to do with the technical aspects of the dharma—they are just reality.

S: Could the same thing be said for the teacher?

CTR: Yes. That seems to be the meaning of spiritual friend. The spiritual friend is a friend for all, rather than a friend for one particular situation or one particular person.

Body

S: You said something about not trusting your body. I'm not sure what you mean by that.

CTR: It's a question of feeling that there is a natural organic situation happening. If you don't relate with that, then your ground is lost, and you have no way of developing clarity. Body, in this case, is a sense of experience, real experience.

Pretending to Practice

S: You said we should pretend as if we can practice in this way, but in trying to practice generosity, patience, or meditation, what happens is that you see your lack, that you are *not* really generous, patient, and so forth. You have this feeling of always being less than the teachings, rather than feeling you are up to it, or you can master it, or it is coming through you.

CTR: As long as you begin to make everything solid and sure, I don't think you can get anywhere. As you begin to realize your deception, that is another deception. So you have to trust your first perception of being a fool. You start by being a fool. You are giving away security, being a fool.

Paramita Practice

S: Rinpoche, among the contradictions to the paramita of morality is not committing evil acts for the sake of compassion. Another contradiction to the paramita of morality is rejecting immoral people. Those seem to be extraordinary reversals of ordinary emotions and morality. Could you say something about that?

CTR: From the hinayana point of view, or a very traditional idea of evil, such actions are evil. However, in the mahayana, if somebody is so highly involved with food that they have stashes of food stuck in their room, it is your duty to steal it from them. That is an evil act according to hinayana—you should not steal—but in the mahayana you are *supposed* to do that! It is some kind of a joke!

Actions and Impulses

S: If you are angry, should you just be aware of that and have faith that it is all going to work out okay? Suppose you think it is harmful and

you want to stop doing it—do you have any advice on skillful means for dealing with that, or for imposing some kind of discipline on yourself?

CTR: If you have an impulse that you want to kill somebody, and you have faith that you are going to kill that person and it's going to be okay—somehow that doesn't work. The very act of killing somebody is a cowardly thing to do. You can have faith in your anger—but you don't have to kill somebody, particularly. That anger is a self-contained thing, so going as far as murdering somebody doesn't apply. The point is to have faith in the basic being of the anger, rather than having faith in the impulse.

S: Many times the action you do arises spontaneously out of the impulse.

CTR: Such actions could be regarded as needless.

S: When you feel an impulse, such as the impulse to have a cigarette, is it really important whether you act on it or not, if you are aware of both the impulse and the action? Maybe that is being too hard or strict on yourself.

CTR: I think there are degrees of actions, of how much rebounds from your actions, and how much your actions are free. If you have to go to the toilet, you don't say that is purely in the mind, or a frivolous thing, unless it is obviously psychosomatic. Some actions are not regarded as frivolous, but organic. Saying that going out and murdering someone is frivolous is another matter altogether. You don't have to go out and kill somebody in order to survive, like you need to go to the toilet. It's a different matter altogether. So there is a sense of fantasy and there is a sense of reality. The question is what your body needs in order to survive and what your emotion needs in order to survive.

S: What do you mean by rebound?

CTR: When things become heavy-handed, you get consequences. If an action is just simple and direct, then there are no consequences.

S: Rinpoche, can you give an example?

CTR: Smoking a cigarette and killing somebody are entirely different. Killing someone needs more emotional buildup; smoking a cigarette needs less. However, if you had planted a bomb in the cigarette or you had been told that smoking a cigarette is a terrible, sinful, destructive thing to do, it could become the same as murdering somebody because of your attitude.

S: In that situation, should one try to lose that attitude and make it a simple act, or realize that it is complicated?

CTR: It depends on how you approach it. It is possible that Hitler's attitude toward murdering Jews was to him like smoking another cigarette. It all depends on your attitude, how crazy you are.

S: Would it be true to say that if you act simply and directly, there are no consequences, but if you did the same thing calculating with your intellect or with your emotions, then you would create more karma for yourself? It isn't necessarily the type of act you do that matters?

CTR: It is your attitude *as well as* what type of act you do. Any action you do has all kinds of attitudes in it already. Whatever you do had different degrees of heaviness, so you can't just say everything is just attitude; action has something to do with it as well. I mean, breaking bottles is different from murdering somebody. Different attitudes go with different actions. So they are reciprocal.

S: In the case of the samurai warrior, their killing somebody may be a very simple and direct thing.

CTR: I wouldn't say the samurai warrior is acting within the attitude of the enlightenment approach. But their style, their philosophy, is fearlessness, which is good. The case of Buddha killing the bandit to save five hundred people's lives is another question. Five hundred people are more important than one person. So it is a matter of degree, a matter of how much consequences are involved with that act.

S: How can the Buddha be sure that one person would kill the five hundred people? He hadn't killed the five hundred people yet.

CTR: Maybe he had a record; we do not know.

S: If I know I don't need the cigarette, if I know it is frivolous, a fantasy, is it my duty as a bodhisattva not to have one?

CTR: It seems to be purely up to you whether you regard smoking cigarettes as frivolous or as just something that you do, a simple act.

S: Actions and impulses are very subtle. It is often difficult to determine whether acting is acting on impulse or acting spontaneously. How does one go about detecting the difference?

CTR: It depends. Certain actions mean a lot to you and certain actions are pure occupation; certain actions are harmful and certain actions are communication. When you are trying to destroy somebody or to create destruction, that action is not an expression of compassion; it is unaware and insensitive. Communication is connected with love and compassion. It says in the bodhisattva texts that passion is preferable to aggression

because passion accepts the situation and aggression rejects the situation. That is one of the ideas of the bodhisattva path.

S: Is judging other people's actions a dangerous, self-defeating process?

CTR: It seems that way, unless there is some warmth in the judgment, in that you want to relate with those people and help them. Otherwise, it becomes very cold. You are just sharpening your sword.

S: Not expressing your emotions might be viewed as cutting off communication. That could be a problem.

CTR: The whole point is to start by communicating with yourself. Seventy-five percent of the world is you; after that, there is another world outside, the other twenty-five percent. If you don't cut communication with yourself, if you are completely in communication with yourself, then there is no problem. Expression comes out naturally.

APPENDIX

The Bodhisattva Vow

Like the earth and the pervading elements,
Enduring as the sky itself endures,
For boundless multitudes of living beings,
May I be their ground and sustenance.

Thus for every thing that lives,
As far as are the limits of the sky,
May I provide their livelihood and nourishment
Until they pass beyond the bonds of suffering.

Just as the buddhas of the past
Embraced the awakened attitude of mind,
And in the precepts of the bodhisattvas
Step by step abode and trained,

Just so, and for the benefit of beings,
I will also have this attitude of mind,
And in those precepts, step by step,
I will abide and train myself.

That this most pure and spotless state of mind
Might be embraced and constantly increase,
The prudent who have cultivated it
Should praise it highly in such words as these:

Today my life has given fruit.
This human state has now been well assumed.
Today I take my birth in Buddha's line,
And have become the Buddha's child and heir.

In every way, then, I will undertake
Activities befitting such a rank.
And I will do no act to mar
Or compromise this high and faultless lineage.

For I am like a blind man who has found
A precious gem within a mound of filth.
Exactly so, as if by some strange chance,
The enlightened mind has come to birth in me.

This is the draft of immortality,
That slays the Lord of Death, the slaughterer of beings,
The rich unfailing treasure-mine
To heal the poverty of wanderers.

It is the sovereign remedy,
That perfectly allays all maladies.
It is the wishing tree bestowing rest
On those who wander wearily the pathways of
existence.

It is the universal vehicle that saves
All wandering beings from the states of loss—
The rising moon of the enlightened mind
That soothes the sorrows born of the afflictions.

It is a mighty sun that utterly dispels
The gloom and ignorance of wandering beings,
The creamy butter, rich and full,
All churned from milk of holy Teaching.

Living beings! Wayfarers upon life's paths,
Who wish to taste the riches of contentment,
Here before you is the supreme bliss—
Here, O ceaseless wanderers, is your fulfillment!

And so, within the sight of all protectors,
I summon every being, calling them to buddhahood—
And till that state is reached, to every earthly joy!
May gods and demigods, and all the rest, rejoice!

Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK IS THE RESULT of the efforts of many people. The contents reflect the extraordinary wisdom of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and of his lineage forefathers. The original sourcebook, *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana,* was a light editing of verbatim transcripts, which in turn were derived from the extensive Vajradhatu tape archives. There is no list or record of the people who worked on the original sourcebook. If you were a contributor—thank you.

In producing this book, we went back to the tapes to double-check the accuracy of the transcription and reedited the corrected transcripts. Gordon Kidd, of Kalapa Recordings, provided the tapes. Ellen Kearney proofed the text and raised valuable points of clarification. Cheryl Campbell—as always—kept a watchful eye on the project. Finally, we would like to offer a special thanks to Diana J. Mukpo for her permission to publish this material and for her ongoing support of our work.

Selected Writings

An Approach to Meditation

A TALK TO PSYCHOLOGISTS

MEDITATION SEEMS to be the basic theme of spiritual practice. It is a vast subject and one that is very loosely defined, so there is a tremendous possibility of distorting it, adding our own version to it. Therefore, it seems quite important to take a look at meditation scientifically in the way it applies to our spiritual practice.

There are all sorts of concepts about meditation. One involves trying to establish communication with a divine power and using exotic techniques to tune in to this power. This particular style of meditation could be defined as a religious practice. Another way of approaching meditation is as a spiritual practice rather than a religious one, working with the perceiver rather than focusing on external divine forces of any kind.

Do such things as divine forces exist or not? Does a God exist or not? The answer is that it is not certain until we work with the perceiver of that particular energy. In the Buddhist form of meditation we try to look at the perceiver of the universe, the perceiver which is self, ego, me, mine. In order to receive guests, we have to have a place to receive them. It is possible, however, that we may not find it necessary to invite any guests at all. Once we have created the place where guests are welcome, we may find they are there already.

The practice of meditation is based, not on how we would like things to be, but on what is. We often do not have a proper understanding of what we are, of what we are actually doing. Instead our attention is focused on the possible end product of the processes we are involved in. Spirituality should be taken very seriously, very honestly. This means it should not partake of that exotic quality which is filled with promises.

From the beginning, it should be concerned with the actuality of who is involved in the practice.

In the tradition of Buddhism, each person in the lineage of teachers develops a self-understanding which adds to the tradition. The process is like handing down a recipe for bread. In each generation the bread is exactly like the original bread, but possibly more flavorful because of the added experience of the bakers involved in the handing down. In each generation the bread is fresh, delicious, and healthy.

One might say, "How can I know that these experiences are valid for me?" I can't say that they are particularly valid for particular individuals unless I have a personal relationship and understanding with them. But certainly the process of working on one's psychological states from a fresh point of view is valid. What I have to say about these psychological states is that they are purely one's own experience. Studying and learning about them is more of a confirmation than new information.

There is a great need to be realistic and critical about what we are. We must not be spiritually gullible. Often we find that what we are is not attractive; we find looking at ourselves discouraging. But looking at ourselves is not finally discouraging; rather it develops the ability to be more realistic. We always ask a question when there is uncertainty. Questions would not arise at all if we did not have the creative ground of uncertainty within us. The questions we ask already contain the answers in embryonic form. In other words, they are expressions of the answers. The answer may turn out to be negative and disappointing, causing us to hate ourselves, but nevertheless, we will have discovered something real.

This self-disillusionment seems to be the starting point of meditation practice. The starting point is dissatisfaction, the absence of a dream, or wishful thinking. It is something realistic, down-to-earth, and direct.

Ego starts from bewilderment; bewilderment or dissatisfaction or not knowing how to step to the next solution. Finding a solution, we haven't actually found it, because we're not exactly certain to whom the solution applies. There is, therefore, a basic suspicion of the nonexistence of ourselves, a basic confusion. Somehow that basic bewilderment or confusion is the working base. From that confusion, basic bewilderment, or basic paranoia, whatever we call it, arises the attempt to communicate further in order to establish our ego.

Each time we try to establish our so-called reality, the basic paranoia

becomes larger and larger; for establishing relationships with the apparent phenomenal world makes demands, requires energy, and the facing of overwhelming situations. When the phenomenal world becomes greater and more powerful than us, there is automatically a feeling of bewilderment. As we continually feel bewildered, we do our best to establish our pattern. In a materialistic sense, we try and become a rich, respectable, or powerful person. In a spiritual sense, we try and adapt to a basic discipline. Finding a basic discipline could be a process which enriches the ego or the self. Even if we follow a spiritual rather than a worldly life, if we don't have the basic understanding of why we are trying to accumulate, we are still materialistic in outlook. This is what is known as psychological or spiritual materialism.

What we do, what we collect doesn't matter. The style of the collection is based on the notion of developing a fundamental health which should be seen as basic ego trying to relate to things as sedatives. Any kind of spiritual practice based on that attitude could be extremely dangerous. One can attain a state that could be called spiritual egohood.

We have a problem there. The question is, how can we approach spirituality otherwise? Is there any possibility of approaching it in another way at all? You might say, "Please don't say no, please tell us some more." Well, that's it in a sense. Once we realize that there is no way out from this end, we want to break through something; we want to step out more, to jump. Jumping or leaping is a very dignified thing to do. It is being willing to be an explorer on the biggest scale, willing to be a samurai in the widest sense, willing to break through, to be a warrior. It seems that the question begins from that point when we actually want to break through something. That leap consists, of course, of giving up goal, aim, and object at the same time. What we are doing in this case is stepping out of even the basic bewilderment; not trying to creep around from underneath or by the back door, but stepping out completely.

We find that in spite of the willingness to explore, we still have the basic bewilderment within us and we have to work with that. This involves accepting the basic bewilderment or paranoia as it is. That is the working base. That basic psychological state consists of layers of psychological facades of all kinds. The basic bewilderment is overwhelmingly stupid and yet intelligent in that it plays its game of deaf and dumb cunningly. Beyond the bewilderment, ego develops certain patterns of

emotions and sensations. When emotions are insufficient to fortify the ego, we apply concept, the conceptual process of labeling and naming things. Things having names and concepts attached to them help us domesticate the bewilderment or confusion. Beyond that, ego collects neurotic thoughts, neurotic not in the sense of mad, but in the sense of irregular. Thoughts in this case change direction all the time and are on very shaky ground. A single thought pattern never develops. Rather, one thought overlaps another—thoughts on spirituality, sexual fantasies, money matters, domestic matters, etc., overlapping all the time. That is the last stage of ego development. In a sense, ego is systematically well fortified.

Bewilderment, as we have said, is reinforced by processes developing at the emotional level. Emotion in this case is the basic magnetizing quality, which is passion, or the basic repelling quality, which is aggression. The next level comes in when the emotions cease to function as impulsive processes. At this point, we need an analytical mind to reinforce them, to put them in their proper place, to confirm their right to be there. The analytical process creates concepts. Concepts are scientifically, mathematically, philosophically, or spiritually worked out.

Concepts and emotions are very crude spokes of the wheel. There is a gap between the two, an area of not knowing where we are, a fear of being nothing. These gaps could be filled with thoughts of all kinds. Discursive thoughts, grasshopperlike thoughts, drunken-elephant-type thoughts all fill the gaps of not knowing what we are, where we're at. If we want to work on that particular base, the idea is to not collect any new things, new subjects.

Further collecting would be inviting invasion from the outside. Since the whole structure of ego is so well fortified against attack, an external invasion is not going to destroy the ego at all. In fact, it is going to reinforce the whole structure because the ego is being given more material with which to work. Meditation practice is based on an undoing, unlearning process. It is an infiltration into this well-fortified structure of the ego.

Beginning meditation practice works purely on dealing with thought processes. It begins there because these thought processes are the last fringes of ego's development. Working on them makes use of certain very simple techniques. The techniques are very important and must be very simple. Presenting exotic techniques tends to emphasize the foreign

quality rather than the familiar, "homey" quality that is most desirable. The technique most often used in the Buddhist tradition is awareness of breathing or walking. These techniques are not ways of developing concentration, tranquillity, or peacefulness, for these qualities cannot be forcibly developed. All of these things are beyond achievement if they are sought after.

The other way of approaching the practice is the gamelike approach. The game is that the path and the goal are the same. You are not trying to achieve anything, but are trying to relate to the path which is the goal. We try to become completely one with the techniques (breathing, walking, etc.). We do not try to do anything with the technique but identify and become one with it. The beginning level of any of the traditions of meditation could be said to be a game, a trip of its own. It's purely imagination; we imagine ourselves meditating. It's another type of dreaming. One has to accept that dreamlike quality and work along with it. We can't start perfectly and beautifully, but if we are willing to start by accepting our neuroses and basic chaos, we have a stepping-stone. Don't be afraid of being a fool; start as a fool.

The techniques of meditation practice are not designed to reduce active thoughts at all. They provide a way of coming to terms with everything that goes on inside. Once we have accepted what goes on in our mind as neither good nor bad, but just flashes of thoughts, we have come to terms with it. So long as we regard the mind's activity as a foreign invasion, we are introducing another new element to the chaos and are feeding it more. If we accept it as part of our ego development, ego structure, and don't evaluate it or put any labels on it, we come much closer to seeing the interior.

After the thought processes, the next barrier is the pattern of concepts. We should not try to push away the concepts, but try to see them realistically. Concepts are based on irrelevant evaluations. There is nothing which is absolutely good or bad. Once we cease to plant the seed of evaluation, the conceptual processes become a neutral and open ground.

The next process is that of emotion: love, hate, etc. A problem arises when we tend to become too ambitious in terms of dealing with emotions—particularly those involved with the spiritual practice. We've been told to be kind, gentle, good people. Those are the conventional ideas of spirituality. When we begin to find the spiky quality in ourselves, we see it as antispirituality and try to push it away. That is the biggest mistake

of all in working with our basic psychological patterns. Once we try to push the biggest problems away and look for a dramatic cure for them, we are constantly pushed back, defeated all the time. The idea is not to seduce ourselves into trying to create a Utopian spirituality, but to try and look into the details of the peak emotions, the dramatic qualities of the emotions. We don't have to wait for situations which are regarded as big and meaningful to us; we should make use of even the small situations in which these emotions occur. We should work on the small or minor irritations and their particular emotional qualities. Do not suppress or let go of irritations, but become part of them; feel their abstract qualities. The irritations then have no one to irritate. They might fade away or become creative energy. If we are able to work brick by brick with those smaller, seemingly insignificant emotions, at some point we will find that removing each brick has taken away the whole wall.

We tend to be involved with ambition in spiritual practice. There's no hope if we become too ambitious in any way. Once this occurs and we try to achieve something very quickly, we are forced to remove the awareness of knowing the situation as it is now. Ambition seduces us into thinking of something that we want to achieve in the future. We become too future-oriented, missing the point of a given situation. Our greatest opportunity is in the present moment and we begin to lose it. However, feeling that the future is an open situation is what meditation practice actually is. Relating with the present situation removes the basic bewilderment that we have discussed, the fundamental heart of the whole ego structure. If we are able to relate with the actual situation as it is, without referring to the past or future, then there are flashes of gaps, possibilities of approaching the present situation. That freshness or sharpness, the penetrating quality of knowing the present situation, brings in a way of looking at the bewilderment with clarity and precision. If we're trying to achieve something in terms of spiritual ambition, that ambition itself becomes a hang-up.

The only way to relate to the present situation of spirituality or the neurotic state of the moment is by meditation. I don't mean sitting meditation only, but relating with the emotional situations of daily life in a meditative way, by working with them, being aware of them as they come up. Every situation then becomes a learning process. These situations are the books; they are the scriptures. You don't need more than that. Books and sacred writings become purely a source of inspiration.

We have to realize that we already have within us the potential of developing spirituality before we read the books or regard them as part of our collection.

By undoing the successive layers of facades, we begin to discover that the precision and sharpness we spoke of is there already. We don't have to develop it or nurse it. It's just a question of acknowledging it. That is what is known as faith and devotion. The fundamental meaning of faith is recognizing that precision, clarity, and health are already there. That is the psychologically wealthy way of looking at situations. You see that you are already rich, that you don't have to search for something else or introduce a new element.

We say that the sun is behind the clouds, but actually it is not the sun but the city from which we view it that is behind the clouds. If we realized that the sun is never behind the clouds we might have a different attitude toward the whole thing.

Question and Answer Session

Audience: For me you made it very clear—the neutral ground of our concepts. But when you talked about emotions, you introduced another word—working on the "small irritations," which is somewhat different. . . . I would like to hear you elaborate on the small emotions.

Rinpoche: Well, the seemingly smaller irritations are not really small but "small" is a way of viewing them. We view them as being insignificant things—such as the little bug crawling up your leg or a drafty window blowing at your face. Little details like that are seemingly insignificant because they have less concepts from your point of view. But they still do have the irritating quality in full flesh. So the way to deal with it is that you have a tremendous opportunity there, because you don't have that heavy concept, so you have a very good open approach toward working with that irritation.

When I say "working with" irritation, I don't mean to say suppress irritation or let go of irritation. But trying to become part of the irritation, trying to feel the abstract quality. You see, generally what happens when we have irritation is that we feel we are being undermined by irritation, and we begin to lose our own basic dignity; something else overwhelms us. That kind of power game goes on always. That is the source of the problem. When we are able to become completely one

with irritations or feel the abstract quality of the irritation as it is, then irritation has no one to irritate. So it becomes a sort of judo practice, the using of the irritation's energy as part of your basic development.

Audience: Could you please relate what you have just discussed with this leap into the void, or this great adventure you mentioned earlier? How do they tie in?

Rinpoche: Well, you see, generally there is a basic bewilderment of not knowing anything. One is uncertain how to approach, how to relate with the situation. Then there is an occasional gap within the basic bewilderment, that something is happening. It's not an overcrowded situation but it's more like a dark corner. Basic bewilderment is a crowded situation under light—you see so many things crowded, the situation is happening in front of your eyes. But then you begin to realize there is also a quiet corner which is still dark but you don't know what is behind that. In such areas there is no bewilderment, only suspicion, of course. Naturally. The whole thing is based on trying to enrich our ego all the time. So the shunyata principle, or the emptiness—leaping into the emptiness—is, one can almost say, leaping into those dark corners. And by the time you leap into dark corners they seem to be brilliant corners, not dark. Darkness, as opposed to what you see purely in front of your eyes, relating with the overcrowded situation, is dark because it is not overcrowding. That is why we begin to regard it as an insignificant or mysterious corner. It is very tricky to talk about leaps because we immediately begin to think where we are leaping from. It's actually more a question of accepting mysterious corners, open space, which doesn't bring any psychological comfort or security for the ego. That is why they are frightening and mysterious, because there is no security of anything at all. So once you acknowledge that complete ultimate freedom of absence of security, then suddenly the carpet is pulled out from under your feet. That is the leap, rather than leaping somewhere deliberately.

Audience: Am I reading you right when you say the effect of meditation begins when one empties oneself from preconceived ideas and notions, and one must empty oneself before one can be filled?

Rinpoche: Well, I wouldn't say that is the aim of meditation particularly, but that is the by-product of meditation. In actual practice you don't have to achieve anything, but you try to be with the technique.

Audience: We have a pattern of becoming one with whatever it is that concerns one and going with it; and in the process it is no longer a problem. I understand Buddhism also contains this thinking.

Rinpoche: I think so, yes. But the whole point is not trying to solve the problem. It's having a friendly, welcoming attitude to the problem.

Audience: I'm amazed that so many of our so-called modern concepts—breathing, etc.—Buddhism has used for thousands of years. I had the pleasure of being with a Buddhist monk in Bali and found that all my "original" thinking was already contained within Buddhism.

Rinpoche: Well, it's something basic, the voice of basic sanity. I mean, you can find it anywhere, in any tradition if it faces reality. It doesn't necessarily have to be Buddhist.

Audience: Is meditation a continuous process of dynamic living?

Rinpoche: Definitely. Without ambition, of course.

Audience: When one is liberated, when one has practiced meditation in the proper way, without ambition, and one reaches the goal, how does one live? What is the nature of his being?

Rinpoche: Well, the actual nature of that being is quite dangerous to talk about.

Audience: Why is it dangerous?

Rinpoche: Well, that could be a temptation.

Audience: An attempt to go there artificially?

Rinpoche: Or unwise.

Audience: Can't we discuss it?

Rinpoche: I would say the continual process of living becomes more real. You are actually in touch with more real reality, the nakedness of reality where there is natural confidence without a framework of relativity. So I would imagine that that state of being, from a personal psychological point of view, is extremely free. But not being free about anything, but just being free, being true.

Audience: Is there ecstasy and rapture?

Rinpoche: I don't think so, because then you have to maintain that ecstasy. It is a state which doesn't involve any maintenance.

Audience: What are the prerequisites before one begins to meditate?

Rinpoche: That you are willing to meditate, willing to go into discipline or practice—a conviction which could be a false conviction at that time, but it doesn't matter.

Audience: How does one go about escaping from the belief in the analytical mind in order to begin?

Rinpoche: Well, it seems that in terms of meditation the literal quality of the technique automatically brings you down, because there is no room for any sidetracks at all. It is quite an absurd, repetitive, ordinary technique, quite boring often; yet somehow you are put into a framework where an instinctive understanding of relating with the technique, rather than an intellectual one, begins to develop.

You see, the problem is that analytical mind cannot be freed by another aspect of analytical mind until the questions of analytical mind are dissolved. This is the same as the method of "Who am I?" in Ramana Maharshi's teaching. If you regard "Who am I?" as a question, then you are still analyzing yourself, but when you begin to realize that "Who am I?" is a statement, the analytical mind becomes confused. One realizes there is something personal about it. Something instinctive which is freed by the actual living situation. The disciplined technique of practicing meditation amounts to putting yourself into an inconceivable situation in which the analytical mind doesn't function anymore. So I would say that the disciplines of the Buddhist teachings are largely a way of freeing oneself from analytical mind. Which has a dream quality. Analytical mind is close to the clouds, while the instinctual level is much closer to the earth. So in order to come down to earth, you have to use the earth as a means of bringing you down.

Audience: What is the relationship between being a vegetarian and the Buddhist practice?

Rinpoche: Well, I think there again we've got a problem. If we regard the whole thing as introducing a foreign element into our system, then we get involved in a particular style of living and we have to maintain that style. And if we don't maintain that style, we feel threatened by it; whereas the natural living situation might present being a vegetarian as a relevant subject for the individual. In other words, the first is dogma and the latter more of a direct situation.

You see, the problem is if you give up something, that automatically means that you take on something. Naturally. And you have to maintain that. And each time there is a congratulatory quality of viewing yourself that develops as well: I'm doing good today, I feel grateful and I'm going to be good tomorrow, and so on. That becomes a further self-deception. Unfortunately, no one can remove your self-deception by his magical powers. You have to work on yourself.

Audience: Could you give us some examples of the meditation practices?

Rinpoche: Generally in the Buddhist tradition the first step is working on the breathing—not concentrating, not contemplating, but identifying with the breath. You are the technique; there is no difference between you and the technique at all. By doing that, at a certain stage the technique just falls away, becomes irrelevant. At that point, your practice of meditation is much more open to meditation in action, everyday life situations.

But that doesn't mean that the person should become absorbed in the state of meditation in the vague sense at all. You see, the basic meditation is being, I suppose we could say. But at the same time it is not being dazed by being. You can describe being in all sorts of ways. You could say being is a cow on a sunny afternoon in a meadow, dazed in its comfort. You could think in terms of an effort of being, trying to bring some effort to yourself to be being. That is to say, being with the watcher watching yourself doing. Then there is actual being—we could call it "actual"—which I suppose is just being right there with precision and openness. I call it panoramic awareness, aerial view. You see a very wide view of the whole area because you see the details of each area. You see the wide view, each area, each detail. Black is black and white is white; everything is being observed. And that kind of openness and being is the source of daily practice. Whether the person is a housewife or secretary or politician or lawyer, whatever it may be, his life could be viewed that way. In fact, his work could become an application of skillful means in seeing the panoramic view. Fundamentally, the idea of enlightenment—the notion or term *enlightenment* or *buddha* or *awakened one*—implies tremendous sharpness and precision along with a sense of spaciousness.

We can experience this; it is not myth at all. We experience a glimpse of it, and the point is to start from that glimpse and gradually as you

become more familiar with that glimpse and the possibilities of reigniting it, it happens naturally. Faith is realizing that there is some open space and sharpness in our everyday life. There occurs a flash, maybe a fraction of a second. These flashes happen constantly, all the time.

Audience: If being is being in everyday life as present in the moment, then what is the tradition of monasteries in Buddhism? Are monasteries just for people who can't cope with very much stress so they have to withdraw to what can be handled? What is the role?

Rinpoche: Well, I would say that monasteries are the training ground. It is the same as putting yourself in a certain discipline when you sit and meditate. You are a monk for that whole time, if you like to put it that way.

Audience: But the goal and object would be finally to leave the monastery and—

Rinpoche: Teach people, work with them. Obviously, yes. That's one of the differences, I would say, between Catholic contemporary enclosure orders and Buddhist ones, that monasteries are training grounds for potential teachers.

Audience: I have a question about one's actual needs in meditation. From books that I've read on meditation and the spiritual way, it seems that the people begin to leave their sexual lives, heterosexual or homosexual, in a way. I'd like your feeling on this—sex, meditation, the spiritual way.

Rinpoche: Well, there again it's entirely relative to the situation where the person is. The brahmacharya idea—which prohibits sex—sees it as something which destroys your completeness. On the other hand, in some traditions of Buddhism, sexuality is regarded as the highest way of living in the world, as the last answer and development. But I don't think the two are contradictory to each other at all. Sex can be a destruction of completion if the person's style of living is demanding, in other words, if there is no space in the relationship at all. Then it is purely a battlefield. But if the relationship becomes dance, the essence of exchange or communication, then the whole pattern of how to perceive that develops. I would say that the situation is very much dependent on the individual person, and sex generally is supposed to be the essence of communica-

tion. Communication can be demanding, which could be destructive and even a way of dissociating oneself from people. Or communication could be inviting people.

Audience: Do you feel it is necessary to have a guru?

Rinpoche: I think so, yes, but at the same time, there are all sorts of dangers involved with shopping for a guru.

Audience: Can the willingness to meditate be differentiated from the awareness of the advantages to be gained from meditating?

Rinpoche: That seems to be an evolutionary pattern. You begin to see the need for it and you put your effort into it. It's like taking medicine.

Audience: What is your opinion about dealing with the chakra system?

Rinpoche: The chakra system is part of the teachings of India, both Hindu and Buddhist. However, it fits differently into the pattern of spiritual evolution of the two traditions. In Hinduism, working with the chakras is familiarizing yourself with spirituality. In Buddhism, having familiarized yourself already, it becomes dancing with spiritual knowledge. And it seems in the latter case that chakra and all those concepts come from that dancing quality which is a using of the energy you have already developed. You have prepared your ground already and you are using the energy around it. I will say that for beginners it is extremely dangerous to play with energy, but for advanced students such work becomes relevant naturally.

Audience: It is said that when one is ready one recognizes his guru. Is it true also that the guru recognizes his disciple?

Rinpoche: I think so, yes. Otherwise he wouldn't be guru.

Audience: Does this recognition take form on the physical plane or only on the subtle?

Rinpoche: Well, the physical plane is also a psychological state. So it's the same thing.

Taming the Horse, Riding the Mind

LEARNING, FROM A non-ego point of view, is based on opening one's heart and discovering a natural sense of discipline. Discipline in this case means attuning ourselves to our inherent purity. We don't have to borrow anything from outside ourselves or mimic anybody. We are naturally pure and intelligent. We may already have some idea or experience of that, but we also need to go further in opening ourselves.

When we begin to open, learning isn't a struggle anymore. It becomes like a thirsty person drinking cool water. It is refreshing and natural. And the more we learn, the more we appreciate. It is quite different from a military academy approach or learning based on struggle of any kind.

Our path is sometimes rough and sometimes smooth; nonetheless, life is a constant journey. Whether we sleep, eat, dress, study, meditate, attend class . . . whatever we do is regarded as our journey, our path. That path consists of opening oneself to the road, opening oneself to the steps we are about to take. The energy which allows us to go on such a journey is known as discipline. It is the discipline of educating oneself without ego, and it is also known as training one's mind.

Educating oneself is said to be like taming a wild horse, a horse which has never been touched by anyone. First you try putting a saddle on its back. The horse kicks, bites, bucks; you try again and again. Finally you succeed. And then you manage to put the rein over its head and the bit into its mouth. Maybe you have difficulty making the horse open its mouth, but at last the bit goes in.

That is a great success. You feel good; you feel that you have accomplished something. Nonetheless, you still have to ride the horse. And

that is another process, another struggle. It is quite possible that the horse will throw you off. If you are able to hold on to the reins, that might help you to control the horse; but it is still questionable. Maybe that would give you 40 percent control. For the rest, you are taking a chance.

Our state of mind is like a wild horse. It contains memories of the past, dreams of the future, and the fickleness of the present. We find that to be a problematic situation, and so we practice what is known as meditation.

The word *meditation* has various meanings, as it is referred to in different traditions. According to *The Oxford Dictionary,* meditation means that you meditate *on* something. For example, when you are in love, you meditate on your lover. Your lover is so beautiful. He or she is extraordinary in lovemaking—moves beautifully, kisses beautifully, and quite possibly smells fantastic! Meditating on those kinds of perceptions just means that you are dwelling on something, occupying yourself with something.

In the fundamental sense, Buddhist meditation does not involve meditating on anything. You simply arouse your sense of wakefulness and hold an excellent posture. You hold up your head and shoulders and sit cross-legged. Then very simply, you relate to the basic notion of body, speech, and mind, and you focus your awareness in some way, usually using the breath. You are breathing out and in, and you just experience that breathing very naturally. Your breath is not considered either holy or evil; it is just breath.

When thoughts arise, you just look at them and you notice "thought." It's not "good thought" or "bad thought." Whether you have a thought of wisdom or a thought of evil, you just look at it and say, "thought." And then you come back to the breath. By doing that, you begin to develop the notion of putting the saddle on the horse. Your mind begins to be trained. It becomes less crazy, less drowsy, and more workable at that point.

This particular practice of meditation is known as *shamatha,* which literally means "dwelling in peace." In this case, peace is not a euphoric or blissful state but simply a basic and down-to-earth situation that results from cutting out hassle and turmoil. We aren't trying to achieve any goal or attain any particular state of being, in either the religious or secular sense.

When we practice in this way, we find that thoughts which perpetuate neurosis melt or evaporate. Ordinarily we don't pay any attention to our thoughts. We unknowingly cultivate them by acting according to whatever they command. But when we sit down quietly and look at them, without judgment or goal—just look at them—they dissolve by themselves.

In shamatha meditation, one's attention span is naturally extended, and one's open-mindedness is developed. You become more steady and also more cheerful—free from turmoil. That is why it is called "shamatha," dwelling in peace.

So that is the first stage in learning: learning how to learn. That is the first step. First you cut through the basic notion of ego, of holding on to neurosis. Beyond that, there is what is known as *vipashyana,* which literally means "insight," practice. In this case, insight is seeing things as they are—not adding passion or aggression to them. Now we are beginning to step outside the meditation compound and examine how we relate to our world.

The world that we live in is fabulous. It is utterly workable. We see motorcars going by in the street, buildings standing as they are, trees growing, flowers blooming, rain and snow falling, water flowing, and wind clearing the air, ventilating . . . whether there is pollution or not. The world we live in is all right, to say the least. We can't complain at all.

We should begin to learn how to appreciate this world, this planet on which we live. We should realize that there is no passion, aggression, or ignorance existing in what we see. We begin by developing mindfulness of our steps, as we walk. Then we begin to experience the sacredness of brushing our hair and putting on our clothes.

Activities such as shopping, answering the telephone, typing, working in a factory, studying in school, dealing with our parents or our children, going to a funeral, checking ourselves in at the maternity department of the hospital . . . whatever we do is sacred. The way we develop that attitude is by seeing things as they are, by paying attention to the energy of the situation, and by not expecting further entertainment from our world. It is a matter of simply being, being natural, and always being mindful of everything that takes place in our day-to-day life.

That develops naturally from shamatha meditation. Sitting medita-

tion is like taking a shower. Vipashyana, or awareness practice, is like drying your body with a towel and then putting on your clothes.

So there are two aspects to our journey, to our learning process: there is learning by sitting meditation and learning by life experiences. And there is no problem in joining these two together. It is like having a pair of eyes and then putting on glasses. It is the same thing.

Meditation

A TALK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

HAS ANYBODY TALKED to you about meditation? The basic idea of the sitting practice of meditation is that it is what the Buddha did, and because of that, he attained enlightenment. That's the basic point. And we have been told how to practice that way too, so that in turn, we can attain enlightenment.

One of the basic ideas is that generally, when we are about in the world, we want a lot of things and we can't get them. And sometimes we get angry with other people. Then we want to destroy them. Sometimes we have so much desire to get something to hold on to. All those things are called obstacles to meditation. They are the problems that we face.

Because of these things we suffer quite a lot, and nobody is basically comfortable with themselves because they are filled with all these feelings of anger, passion, and all the rest of it. Sometimes people say they are happy but, at the same time, they are restless all the time and in the depths of themselves they are suffering quite a lot. Such pain and suffering come from having too many thoughts and the confusion of passion, aggression, and ignorance—which is called ego. You know about that: ego? Right.

The idea of meditation is not necessarily to just get rid of these thoughts and feelings right away, but simply to work with them. As you sit, first you begin to feel some sense of yourself. Then as you sit more, you begin to find lots of thoughts coming out. Just look at them and don't necessarily push them aside or cultivate them, but come back to your breath.

Holding the meditation posture is doing what the Buddha did. The idea is that if you make this gesture of good posture, that straightens your sense of discipline and presence. And then, experiencing that, you feel your breath and go along with the breath. The basic idea is that you don't have to push the thoughts away, but you can almost get underneath thoughts. Out of that you could develop some sense of calmness, but sometimes it goes away. It's like trying to catch a fish in the water with your naked hand. It slips away.

The idea is to remain with the discipline and to slowly overcome, first of all, the thought process, and then after that, to slowly overcome passion, aggression, and ignorance until, at some point, they begin to become meaningless—until they no longer are a big deal.

Then your ego begins to diminish a little bit, become less, become less of an ego. You begin to have a glimpse of what is called egolessness, which is the first step toward enlightenment. In order to do that, you also have to work with your everyday life situations. Sometimes when you're not sitting, you might suddenly develop mindfulness. When that happens, look at yourself and try to be calm with some sense of not holding on to anything; just be steady, still. That doesn't necessarily mean to say that you physically have to hold steady, but psychologically you do.

If you're about to have a fight, just flash, and then hold steady. The idea of wanting to have a fight begins to dissolve, and, in turn, because of that, one begins to develop what is known as compassion. You begin to have more trust in yourself, less destructiveness in yourself, and less pain. And because you have less pain, therefore you're able to communicate that to other people. Working with oneself that way, in turn, you begin to work with others. That seems to be the basic point of why you have to practice meditation.

If you have any questions, you are welcome.

Student: Why do you follow your breath and concentrate on your breath instead of your finger or whatever?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, well, that's a good point. You see breathing is actually a communication between your mind and body. Body is too solid to concentrate on because it's too gross a level. And you can't hold on to mind because it's constantly moving. So breathing is something in between, which communicates mind and body together.

S: I thought that when you got egolessness that you were enlightened, and instead, it's just one step toward enlightenment?

TR: Well, it's like removing a cloud. The sun is there already, but this is removing the clouds. So you have the sun already, but ego is a layer or covering rather than anything fundamental. Therefore, basically we are good but we've been covered up. So we are removing coverings. That's why you can actually undo them. Otherwise, if the clouds were permanent, you couldn't do anything with them, right?

S: It's like have a clear mind.

TR: Absolutely, that is clear mind.

S: But my parents are telling me that people are all enlightened but they just don't know that. . . .

TR: Well, we might say that we know there is a sun, but still it is very cloudy. You see that is the only reason that enlightenment is permanent: it is not manufactured. It's there all the time. And anything beyond that, such as ego and passion, aggression and ignorance, are impermanent. They come and go. Therefore we can handle them. And they come back too: sometimes when you remove them, they come back. So you keep on clearing out.

S: What would happen if you didn't have a clear mind?

TR: Then you suffer a lot. You're constantly tortured. You know, people are trying to please themselves but there's no way of doing it, even if you're a millionaire. They have everything physically that they want, lots of money and a comfortable situation, but they're not very happy fundamentally.

S: Thank you.

TR: You're welcome.

The Spiritual Battlefield

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT the word *mind,* we are talking about the different levels or states of consciousness. It does not have anything to do with higher levels of consciousness, whatever that might be. We are talking about mind and its different functions—the literal mind, or simple thought process that takes place in our everyday life: before you drive, you check that you have a key in your pocket; before you smoke cigarettes, you make sure that you have a match in your pocket; before you eat, you make sure the meal's been cooked, and little things like that. That kind of reasoning mind is intelligent, and it functions constantly.

Of course, depending on adulthood or adolescence or infanthood, that kind of logic begins to grow and become somewhat more sophisticated. As you become a grown-up person and after that, an old man or woman, your training as to how to work things out develops so that you don't run into unnecessary chaos. Our parents used to train us, and our elders used to criticize us, so that finally we think we've got our trip together, so to speak. If you are going to see somebody, you call them first and make sure they are at home or that it is convenient for you to visit. Simple little situations like that are the basic intelligence taking place.

In the business realm, domestic realm, and ordinary everyday life, whatever you do, there is a sense of priority. You know what you are going to do and everything is planned. Often people make lists of things in notebooks and put them in their pockets. You have your style of making sure everything is okay and in order so that you don't run into any unexpected chaos and problems. The important thing is that things don't

bounce back on you, that you don't lose control of them. So you make sure that everything is under control, that you have control over everything.

We do everything in a very meticulous way, very special, very careful. We would like to take care of ourselves as much as we can. Although we are abused and blamed by our elders or our parents saying, "You don't care for yourself. You should pull yourself together!" nevertheless we think that we are doing a pretty good job of ourselves, taking care of our food, housing, and clothes. Whatever way you would like to present yourself to the world, you just buy the appropriate clothes, appropriate haircut, appropriate way of speaking. All of that is a function of what is called mind. The Tibetan word for that [aspect of mind] is *sem,* which means "whatever can communicate to the object world."

Lodrö

Then we have another type of mind, which seems to be an entirely different angle—maybe not entirely, but relatively different—which is that we have whole avenues of unexplored areas of all kinds. We have memories of the past, we have expectations of the future, we might become somewhat proud of ourselves occasionally. We look for resources, maybe through the information that we learned in high school or at the first-grade level. We look back at our grammar, look back at our mathematics, look back at our science course. We look back and if we cannot find anything at those levels, we try to work our reasonable logic. Usually we can do a pretty good job of that. We can dig up some kind of intelligence or continuity.

We don't have to give up the whole thing as if we had a complete mental blockage. Sometimes we panic, thinking we might have a mental blockage. We are completely freaked out and thinking of dropping out of school. Maybe you have done so already or are about to do so. All kinds of things happen. The language of philosophy and metaphysics may be too complicated even to relate with. At the beginning, it turns out to be a mishmash of all kinds of jumbled-up large vocabulary which is almost incomprehensible. Particularly if you have an attitude against Greek and Latin, when you look back on our language, you are intimidated. You don't have any understanding about the languages we have

used to understand philosophy, science, mathematics, or cosmology. But if you push yourselves hard enough and are diligent, you usually make a good job out of that. That's common knowledge. If you don't freak out and panic halfway through, if you push yourself hard enough and indulge yourself in the pride of becoming a scholar, one day you are going to make it. There is a strong possibility of doing that.

That particular stage is called *lodrö* in Tibetan, which means "intellect." The Sanskrit word is *mati*. *Lo* is "intelligence," *drö* is a sense of "warming up the intelligence." So there is a sense of warmth, or heat. You don't chicken out. When we talk about chickening out in this case, we are talking about when we feel cold, as when we say, "I'm getting cold feet about something or other." You don't get cold feet, but you get warm feet—warm head. Heat or warmth takes place. We feel we can exhaust ourselves and push ourselves to the limit, that we could pull ourselves up to understand and study. That is the lodrö level, which is intellect. We can *use* our mind from that point of view.

Rikpa

Then we have another layer of the definition of mind, which is beyond intellect. In Tibetan it is called *rikpa*, which means "a sense of fundamental intelligence." The Sanskrit word for rikpa is *vidya*, which means "the knowledge that can comprehend subtle scientific experiences and demonstrations." So rikpa is experience. It also could refer to particular disciplines, which could be regarded as rikpas of all kinds: the rikpa of scientific language or knowledge, or whatever.

Vidya, or rikpa, is intelligence, pointed intelligence. With this kind of intelligence, the mind becomes very sharp and so precise and completely proud of itself. It turns itself into a computer in some sense—not only in the sense of mathematics alone, but in the sense of self-respect. There is a sense of wholesomeness, of complete command of the discipline that you are studying. That sense of completely covering the whole area is rikpa. Rikpa, or vidya, can comprehend that fundamental sense of survival. What this particular computer is all about is appreciating that sense of survival, the sense of dualism, sense of behavior, sense of pattern—but fundamentally, it comprehends a sense of *being*.

Professor [Herbert] Guenther talks about analytical mind in his

writings. That is a similar reference. There is a subtle sense of being which brings the actuality of a sense of being at the same time. Because you have subtle understanding, therefore you begin to relax more. You have less fear of your existence, your particular state of mind. Whatever goes on, everything is going to be okay. I can understand. I exist and you exist, so everything is going to be okay. There is nothing to panic about. Everything can be worked out mathematically and logically, or experientially. Things are workable. That fundamental, basic pride of ego is that there is something that is workable. That seems to be one of the basic points of mind.

The Five Skandhas

Then the mind is divided into another five types of process. I don't want to present you with a lot of figures, but I think this one is necessary for you to understand. There are five types of consciousness, which are called the five *skandhas,* or "heaps of collective things that happen in our mind." We don't exist from that point of view. Even our pride of self-existence, or sense of being, is by no means one entity. It is a collective entity of all kinds of things jumbled together. That is why the skandhas are called heaps. Maybe the closest to it, a free translation with a touch of humor, is "garbage." When we talk about disposing of the garbage we have collected, we don't usually talk about just one thing as garbage. We have collected lots of things to build such garbageness, that air of being garbage. Everything has been collected, and everything is related with each other—and it is decayed and smelly and unpleasant, and we want to get rid of that collective thing, or garbage. Skandhas are a similar situation.

The first skandha is called the skandha of *form.* It is a state of uncertainty. A sense of being is constantly operating in our state of mind, but we don't really want to commit ourselves to it. There is basic bewilderment and uncertainty as to who is this being. Who we are, what we are, is uncertain. We think we do exist, we think our name is so-and-so, we think we have an ego of some kind, but we actually have no idea how and why, what exactly is the case. We are completely uncertain experientially. Of course, logically we can explain it in complete detail, but that seems to be simply trying to reinforce ourselves constantly.

Actually, personally, experientially, when we look into our state of being, this me that seems to be the experiencer—*I* seem to be experiencing me-ness, and *I* seem to be experiencing thisness, *I* seem to be experiencing there is something happening here. As we say, something is cooking. But what is this? It could be all kinds of things. For one thing, I don't feel particularly good; therefore I feel very self-conscious myself. I feel my clumsiness and my uptightness—I did this and I did that and I don't feel so good—therefore maybe this is a product of sickness of some kind. Maybe I am freaking out. That is the popular answer that you get, that bad message—here was something, but it's gone rotten, therefore finally it's giving itself in. Of course not! That is the state of being *in any case,* all the time.

That self-existing Danish blue cheese is constantly fermenting itself, whether you pass store after store of it or customers bought it and put it in their refrigerators. That Danish blue cheese is still fermenting itself, growing fungus after fungus in it. It's taking place all the time. It is not because you behaved badly in a particular year, particular month, particular week, and therefore things have gone wrong. It has nothing to do with sudden chaos. It was the case all the time—or the basic reason that you don't really exist. And trying to make yourself exist is like the blue cheese trying to maintain itself by overgrowing its fungus and becoming dissolved into nothingness.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is the case. That is the perfect case. We don't exist as one whole being, one whole entity at all. We are collective. We are a collection of lots of things, and all of those entities are uncertain whether that entity exists or not. Every cell of this consciousness is defeating itself and uncertain of itself. So there is no sense of being, really, fundamentally. It's purely a dream we try to put together. That seems to be the basic point of the skandha of form.

Then we have the skandha of *feeling.* Having at least had some experience that if you have a bag of sand in your hand, the grains of sand are separate and perishable, still you try to hold on to the bag. That is the state of consciousness on the level of [feeling or] emotion. In this case, emotion is not a particularly highly developed state of emotion. It is emotion from the point of view of trying to feel out the textures of life. "If I get into this situation, will it be kind and harmonious? If I get into that situation, on the other hand, maybe it would be more friendly and harmonious to me." You are constantly looking further and further—for

a strong and solid bag that you can put the grains of sand that you collected into, trying to hold them together. That chaos that exists, that no-entity that exists, is trying to create a bag or container, territory.

Out of that feeling comes *impulse.* In the same way that there is the desire to take an immediate leap, you could communicate with that, as if there is a message of your existence coming back to you: "This experience is very aggressive to you, trying to fight you; this experience is very yielding to you, you can include it in part of your system." We begin to celebrate that; we feel very good about it. We begin impulsively, very frivolously, to try to latch on to such information, such reinforcement coming to us. Whether it is aggressive or passive doesn't really matter. We are looking for some kind of reinforcement, some kind of response. That is the point of impulse.

Impulse leads us into what's known as *concept.* Concept is that we don't only try to name or conceptualize particular shades of impulse into that quality or this quality. Now we begin to realize that we have magnetized enough reinforcement as our friend, as our army of soldiers, and we begin to give them authority: "You be my secretary; you should be my general; you should be my lieutenant; you should be my colonel; you should be my soldier." You begin to label things so that you could protect *me, my existence.* Concepts of all kinds are being developed.

On the level of spirituality, a certain religious practice is very helpful, and that is going to reinforce my existence. A certain political move may be good to maintain myself. A certain domestic move might be good. Certain behavior and eating certain prescribed food might be good to maintain myself. Experiencing certain types of physical exercises might be good for me. Following particular disciplines would be good for me to experience. We can go haywire on that and collect so many things, from tuning in to cosmic consciousness and getting high and tripped out, to the point of being kind to your next-door neighbor. There is a long range of possibilities. Spiritually and domestically, there are all kinds of concept-oriented possibilities.

After that, there is what is known as *consciousness.* It is the state of consciousness that exists in the realm of past information and memories coming back to you and present thoughts coming to you all the time. In order to maintain ourselves, to at least hold on to our ego, we are trying to hold on to something that is there—which is subconscious gossip of all kinds, visual types of discursive thoughts, quotations coming back to

you, past glimpses of experiences, and future expectations coming back to you. So the thought process acts as a kind of screening process for you: finally you have your castle, you have your soldiers, you have your army, and you have your subjects. You have become king of the ego realm. Everything is worked out from detail to detail. The emotions that exist in our state of being are related with the fifth skandha, the skandha of consciousness. Emotions of all kinds—such as anger, pride, passion, jealousy, and ignorance—are the highlights of the thought process. The less important thought process is the ordinary gossip that goes on through our mind. So finally we make ourselves a completely solid being out of nothingness.

The five-skandha process is by no means a personal experience we have already gone through. It is happening all the time. It is not that those experiences already happened and therefore all of that process is purely a myth at all, that once upon a time you had the first skandha and now you are at the level of the fifth skandha. What we are talking about here is a personal experience that happens constantly in our state of being. It becomes very real to us all the time. Every moment is a state of the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth skandha. That seems to be the basic point.

MEDITATION

The practice of meditation in relationship with that is to undo them step-by-step, constantly. Hold back the sense of frivolousness, but work with the inspiration. The first step of meditation practice is dealing with the fifth skandha of consciousness with the understanding that you have basic mistrust or confusion or bewilderment in your state of being—which is an understanding of the first skandha, the skandha of ignorance, bewilderment.

Understanding that and taking that as a basic standpoint, we then can work on the further skandha process, beginning with the fifth skandha.

It seems that there is no other way than the practice of meditation that you can deal with such an advanced subject, such a vast state of mind. There is no other way, absolutely no other way. That seems to be the only possibility. Otherwise, if you look into alternatives of all kinds, you may be able to find somebody who thought up some great idea in

the corner of the universe, maybe a fantastic thing to try. However, its relationship to our state of being is uncertain. We are not quite certain.

This project is a huge project, an enormous project. It has been the battlefield between enlightenment and samsara for billions of years. It is the heart of spirituality. So it seems much better and more sensible at this point to get into that big project first, to try to deal with the greatest problem and difficulty that exists, rather than trying to pick up the crumbs first, saying to ourselves, "Well, let me try to pick the whole thing up before we get into this big thing"—because that means you are chickening out. You find all kinds of little things that you can tidy up to make sure that you don't have to get to the big project, which is a very big deal. So it seems to be necessary to take some kind of leap or jump. It takes a state of heroism. We are launching into the big project without discussing the little details.

Even asking how to do it, "What is the way?"—whenever we talk about how to do it and what is the way, we are talking in terms of saving problems and pain. We are trying to buy a pair of gloves, a pair of pliers, so that we don't have to strain our hands dealing with things. This particular approach is that we can use our naked hands to deal with our naked mind very directly, very precisely.

The attitude is not so much to destroy ego as a villain or evil force, but to work with that situation as a stepping-stone, as a process. At this point, the only material we have is ego. There is no other way to spirituality. Ego is the starting point. It is the only way, the only path we have in relating with spirituality and enlightenment. So in fact, from that point of view we should celebrate that we have ego. We have some hope of attaining enlightenment because we have ego, which is the starting point. That seems to be the attitude of the warrior.

The Birth of Ego

TRADITION IS NOT NECESSARILY a system developed by anybody, but tradition is the natural understanding of things as they are, which is based on why we see—and everybody agrees—that the sky is blue and the grass is green. Tradition is that way, rather than anybody's established law and order or personal opinion of any kind. Therefore tradition is common sense at its best.

Enlightenment is also the height of common sense. Therefore it is regarded as a tradition. It is also regarded as infallible, as true and powerful. It never can be contradicted. Nobody can say "the sky is green" or "the grass is red"—maybe some people, but basically speaking, nobody can say that [laughs]. That basic logic—that hot is hot, cold is cold, daytime is light, and nighttime is dark—is tradition. That is the truth and at the same time it is tradition.

There is no notion of ego at all at the beginning, but there is the notion of intelligence. That particular intelligence begins to look at others, at one's surroundings. Therefore one begins to develop awareness of other. Because others exist, therefore one begins to realize that one has to match up to them. It's like a matching fund: if you have $40,000, then you ask somebody else to match that $40,000, so we can raise $80,000 together. I hope my mathematics are right there. In turn, we might begin to raise $16,000 beyond that, because we have already raised the first matching fund. And then we go beyond, beyond, and beyond, raising lots of funds because of the original matching fund.

That's how it actually begins with the ego situation as well. You exist; therefore I exist, to begin with, very simply. And the reason we know you exist is because we have no idea at all! The first thing is that you

don't exist; therefore others exist first. Ladies and gentlemen, I don't want to confuse you further, nonetheless it is quite a tempting discussion. When others exist, that is what you see first, before you realize you are there. Before you think you are there, you begin to see other very strongly. And then, since there is other, there are possibilities that the other should be conquered, subjugated, or seduced. So those two possibilities of aggression and passion begin to develop. And the third possibility is that, when others exist, and you think you can't match your fund with them, then you just ignore them completely, totally. Then ignorance begins to develop. "Couldn't care less" begins to develop. So those three possibilities—passion, aggression, and ignorance—begin to develop. We begin to feel that we have something substantial to hold on to. That is what's known as ego, so-called ego, which is based on a snowballing situation. There is nothing really such as ego, but there is a somewhat fictional idea of some kind based on reference point. Because of other, we begin to develop our selves. Therefore we begin to reject possibilities of gentleness and to develop one-up-manship, aggression, and what's known as "macho-ness," egohood. We begin to impose our possibilities of power over others: that when you see red, you should conquer the red; when you see blue, you should seduce the blue; and so forth. We begin to develop that particular system, which is completely unnecessary.

In turn, we begin to develop the notion that the sky, or heaven, is not vast enough. We begin to regard heaven as a pie, which we think we can cut up into pieces, eat it, chew it, swallow it, and taste it. In turn, we begin to shit it out, so to speak. So we cease to have greater vision of heaven altogether, sky altogether. Therefore we begin to fix our existence, based on either passion, aggression, or ignorance.

In order to overcome such egomaniac possibilities, we are talking in terms of developing greater vision. Nonetheless, in order to overcome ego, we have to undo our habitual patterns, which we have been developing for thousands of years, thousands of aeons, up to this point. Such habitual patterns may not have any realistic ground, but nonetheless, we have been accustomed to doing dirty work, so to speak. We are used to our habitual patterns and neuroses at this point. We have been used to them for such a long time that we end up believing they are the real thing.

In order to overcome that, to begin with, we have to see our egoless-

ness. That's quite a lengthy discussion we might have later on: seeing the egolessness of oneself and the egolessness of other, and how we can actually overcome our anxiety and pain, which in Buddhist terms is known as freedom, liberation, freedom from anxiety. That is precisely what nirvana means—relief. So as we will discuss other possibilities further, particularly the four types of obstacles, I would like to stop here. Maybe we could have some discussion. Thank you very much.

Question: Sir, you mentioned that first there's ego of other, and then ego of self develops. But don't they arise simultaneously?

Vidyadhara: Not necessarily. First there is other. It is like when you wake up in the morning. The first thing you are woken up by is the daylight. And if you fall in love with somebody, you see your sweetheart first; after that you fall in love. You don't just fall in love to begin with, because you don't have anyone to fall in love with. So there is always *other* to begin with; then you have your things going after that.

Q: Well, how is it then that to realize egolessness of other, you work backward from the egolessness of oneself?

VCTR: That's because you have done the whole thing already. Therefore you begin to realize you are the starter, not necessarily from the point of view of logistics, particularly, but that you have a strong hold on the whole thing. You fall in love with somebody, the other; therefore you are as much in love with yourself. Therefore we start with *here,* to overcome other. It's very basic and very ordinary. In other words, if you are not supposed to take sugar, you see sugar first, but then *you* stop taking it, which starts with you, right?

Q: I guess I just feel that there has to be some sort of echo, some sort of trace there, even to react to other.

VCTR: Well, in any case, that's the point you perceive first: so first thought is other; second thought is this. Next the action is *that,* and then after that, *this,* which goes back and forth many times. But the first and only way to stop is to stop *this.*

Q: Rinpoche, I'd like to ask a question about last night's talk. When you spoke of basic goodness, fundamental goodness, and then went on to say that without white there's not black, without blue there's no red, and developed that dialectic; well, how about basic badness—the opposite of goodness? That brings to mind the Christian mystics' belief, Thomas Merton and others, of a basic sort of badness—original sin.

VCTR: That's very interesting. When we talk about basic goodness, we are not talking about good as a goody-goody principle, but we are talking about the application and possibilities of fertility of any kind. Before even the notion of good or bad happens at all, there is basic goodness, which allows things to happen, allows things to manifest in their own right or at their own best. The basic point of the Catholic tradition of original sin and punishment, I regard as purely a teaching technique, rather than a presentation of totality or an evolutionary principle, particularly. I could quite safely say that the notion of original sin came about at the beginning by people being told that "You are made out of the image of God himself." There are a lot of possibilities of going wrong with that, taking lots of pride and arrogance in that: "I'm made out of God." Nonetheless, even though you are made out of God, you do something wrong. So there is original sin, first sin, which comes from arrogance. That seems to be fine.

Q: Sir, when you were speaking of there being nothing—I think you said—the first thing was *other,* and then because of that, we have a sense of self. Is that still simple perception at that point, before you get into some kind of reverberation or echo back and forth? Is that the ego part or is it already ego at that point?

VCTR: At the beginning? I don't think there is any ego at the beginning at all. When we first perceive the other, even then there is no ego. But then you begin to perceive *yourself* because of the other—that is the beginning of ego.

Q: Is it when you begin to perceive yourself, at that point?

VCTR: Perceive oneself, yes. Linguistically, it goes: "am . . . I." "Am" is the other, "I" is me, which is a question, as we use the English language—"Am I?" that actually works quite fine with that principle. So first is "am." "Am what?" You may be able to liberate from that without saying "Am I?" Then you have just "am." After that we become "I." "Am *I* good?" "Am *I* bad?" It begins with a question, which is very interesting from the logic of philology, how the English language actually developed.

Q: Sir, I just wanted to ask when that happened, because there are all kinds of implications for children, for babies. Are you saying that that happened at some time in our development, or before we were born?

VCTR: Well, we can't actually make sure children don't have ego. That's part of education. You have to have education and children have

to have ego. We can't actually make sure that children are egoless. That goes along with a natural process. They have to learn to say, "I" and "no" and "yes." I think we can't do anything very much about that.

Q: But that state before recognizing *other,* is that something that we've ever had as people after we were born?

VCTR: Well, as soon as the child sees *you,* that is *other.* Although you have been busy telling your child that there are other people so that children should be careful and not shit on them, not pee on them, that is something else, actually. That's used for the sake of convenience. But the others are always there. When children begin to open their eyes, they are aware of others, always there. So we can't really raise children in a very sneaky Buddhist style [laughter], so that they don't have any egos left.

Q: So we only really experience that egolessness through meditation practice . . .

VCTR: That's right, that's the only way. First they have to know what not to have, to have what not to have, in order that they should have what they should have.

Q: It seems then very obvious that you can't get rid of ego, because you can't get rid of something that doesn't exist.

VCTR: I beg your pardon?

Q: You can't really conquer something that doesn't exist.

VCTR: Well, by realizing it doesn't exist, that *is* conquering, right?

Q: But in the sense of an aggressive act of conquering.

VCTR: Well, you can't destroy it, particularly, but realizing it doesn't exist as such is at the level of conquering. Because there is so much myth in it, we are more or less destroying the myth, which is regarded as conquering.

Okay, ladies and gentlemen, we could stop this point. I would like to encourage you to take sitting practice more seriously. Since we are getting into much deeper subjects from now onward, it will be very important for you to sit and find out for yourselves what it is all about. Thank you very much.

The Wheel of Life

ILLUSION'S GAME

THE WHOLE DHARMA is the language of samsara. That is why this painting is called the wheel of life, or bhavachakra—the wheel of existence, or becoming (samsara). This wheel is the portrait of samsara and therefore also of nirvana, which is the undoing of the samsaric coil. This image provides a good background for understanding illusion's game, based as it is on the four noble truths as the accurate teaching of being in the world. The outer ring of the nidanas describes the truth of suffering; the inner ring of the six realms describes the impetus of suffering; and the center of the wheel describes the origin of suffering, which is the path.

The wheel of life is always shown as being held by Yama (a personification meaning death, or that which provides the space for birth, death, and survival). Yama is the environment, the time for birth and death. In this case, it is the compulsive nowness in which the universe recurs. It provides the basic medium in which the different stages of the nidanas can be born and die.

The outer ring of the evolutionary stages of suffering is the twelve nidanas. *Nidana* means "chain," or chain reaction. The nidanas are that which presents the chance to evolve to a crescendo of ignorance or death. The ring of nidanas may be seen in terms of causality or accident from one situation to the next; inescapable coincidence brings a sense of imprisonment and pain, for you have been processed through this gigantic factory as raw material. You do not usually look forward to the outcome, but on the other hand, there is no alternative.



The wheel of life.

IMAGE #591. COURTESY OF THE SHELLEY & DONALD RUBIN FOUNDATION.

The death of the previous nidana gives birth to the next one within the realm of time, which is itself compulsive. Rather than one ending and another beginning, each nidana contains the quality of the previous one. Within this realm of possibility, the twelve nidanas develop.

The first stage is ignorance, avidya. This is represented by a blind grandmother who symbolizes the older generation giving birth to further situations, but itself remaining fundamentally blind. The grandmother also represents another element, the basic intelligence which is the impetus for stirring up endless clusters of mind/body material, creating such claustrophobia that the crowded situation of the energy sees itself. At this point, the sense of intelligence is undermined—nothing matters but the fundamental deception or loneliness. Simultaneously the overcrowded, clumsy discrimination (thingness, solidified space) is in the way. This is experienced as a subtle irritation combined with subtle absorption. This irritation extends to the grandchild but still remains the grandmother.

This absorption could be called fundamental bewilderment, the "samsaric equivalent of samadhi," an indulgence in something intangible which is the bewilderment. The solidified space results from trying to confirm this intangible and is the beginning of self-consciousness at that level. You begin to discover that there are possibilities of clinging to intangible qualities as if they were solid. You feel as if there were desolation in the background. You have broken away from something and there's an urge to create habitual patterns. There is a sense of discovery for you have found some occupation after a whole trip of exploring possibilities, but at the same time you sense the possibility of losing ground forever.

The next nidana presents itself mechanically with the image of a potter's wheel. There is a sense of occupation and responsibility, as though you are a child suddenly condemned to be the director of a big corporation. This second stage is samskara or impulsive accumulation, which enables you to turn the potter's wheel constantly.

But now you are in charge of an individual and quite private game and have a sense of individuality and privacy. At this point, the inkling of a sense of power begins to develop, because you are able to sow a seed or set the wheel in motion. But there is a need of furthering this ambition, which leads to the next nidana—consciousness, or vijnana. The symbol for consciousness is a monkey.

The next nidana is a gesture of hope and of a dream coming true. It is namarupa, or name and form, symbolized by a person in a boat. When an object has a conceptualized name, it becomes significant. You name the person in terms of your intellectual discoveries and you create the image of the form of the person in accordance with the house (or castle for that matter) which you create. You call it Princess So-and-so or King So-and-so. Name and form are the same. The verbal concept and the visual concept are the same. The names and forms serve as political or philosophical reinforcement. If you have a king or a lord who occupies this particular castle, you would automatically expect that he ought to have an accompanying sense of dignity, and that the title should fit the person who occupies this accommodation.

This leads us to the next nidana, sadayatana, sensation or sense consciousness, which is represented by a monkey in a six-windowed house. Some kind of a sense of establishment is necessary, purely from the point of view of administration. The six sense organs and the six sense consciousnesses provide a relatively secure home, but still there is the sense of the absence of somebody. Here the whole situation is still tentative and embryonic. In other words, you need to have occupants for the structure, someone quite sophisticated and capable of running the place you've already created. The inquisitive quality of this politician is represented by the monkey, and he is relatively awake as far as his ape qualities can function. There is some paranoia in that you suspect that the castle's occupant is very undignified, because this ape has to function both as guardian and as director. This dual role naturally leads to some sophistication and a sense of diplomacy.

The maintenance of the kingdom leads us to the next nidana, represented by a married couple. It is sparsha, or contact between the masculine and feminine concepts which complement each other. By trying to capture the fascination and make it into a solid thing, this pair develops a sense of personality and self-respect which is not based upon domestic affairs alone but also upon foreign relationships.

At this point the next nidana presents itself. This is feeling, vedana, which is symbolized by an arrow through the eye. A foreign power introduces itself, but the inquisitive mind pretends to accept this as a delightful surprise, even as a convenience, because it has no choice. There is sharp dramatic feeling, but there is no chance to indulge in a sudden unexpected invitation. You have already magnetized the foreign diplomat

(the arrow) and simultaneously you have confirmed your kingdom. It is the first real perception of this and that, which is the world outside. This brings us to the next nidana, trishna or craving, symbolized by drinking milk and honey.

You are embarrassed because the wholehearted and eager reception of the foreign diplomat was too impulsive, and there is a tendency to tone down. In spite of that tendency, you try your best to relate to him, but at the same time you experience a natural self-indulgence and craving for further contacts which are like the flavor of milk and honey. There is also a tendency to sip and taste and to try to resist swallowing. A possible feeling of repulsion goes through the whole ritual because it is overcrowding, but the impulsive situation takes over and leads us to the next nidana. This is upadana or grasping, symbolized by gathering fruit.

The subtle manipulation of wishful desire is not enough. There is a tendency to be boyish, to do things as you feel them; you are not concerned with who owns the orchard, but you run out of this stuffy castle and roam around the grounds trying to be outrageous. You pick up fruits and eat them—they are something very definite, lumpy and satisfying. It is very reassuring to hold them, even more so to bite into them without peeling them. At this point, there is an inevitable tendency to feel that someone else could possibly share this experience, or that at least there might be someone to relate to; and this feeling provokes a sense of loneliness and a longing for companionship. This leads us to the next nidana, bhava or becoming, which is symbolized by copulation.

Bhava celebrates the achievement of relating with another mind/body. It shows new dimensions—the shapes and sculptural qualities of the world are extremely satisfying to feel. It seems that this is the only way of appreciating organic and natural situations. You develop a tremendous awareness of things, including the visual aspect of sense perceptions. At the same time this sensual overindulgence invites valid proof, and you want the evidence of being father or mother to provide a sense of legitimacy. This leads us to the next nidana, jati or birth, symbolized by a woman in childbirth.

Having given birth to something, a sense of power begins to develop at this point. The simplicity of being creator of the universe is not far away. Becoming goes so far into action that it produces karmic results

in this nidana. For example, in a situation of murder, hate gives birth to a corpse. And there are many other possibilities.

But that vitality does not last. The discovery of change becomes irritating and the achievement of this self-indulgence becomes questionable. There is nothing to relate with in terms of continual entertainment; it becomes empty. You have to face the possibility of decay, feebleness, and imminent death. It is inescapable. The exuberance of youth relates to this crescendo of old age which follows it automatically. Here, extremely cunning intelligence is led to extreme clumsiness in that pure demanding no longer fulfills its function. You see that your game of efficiency is not that efficient after all. But you do not realize that this derelict situation contains another outrageous discovery, which is the next nidana, jara marana, or old age and death, symbolized by a funeral procession.

Death is the physically overpowering situation of too many things you have to manage. Once upon a time, too many things were exhilarating, but that excitement becomes questionable at this point. The many massive objects and relationships which you have created become the inspiration for the charnel ground.

The confused mind finds different styles of occupation. Therefore the six realms of the world can be said to be psychological states, rather than external situations such as a heaven above and a hell below. The realms are known as the whirlpool of illusion—samsara. There is no starting point and no definite order—you can take birth in any realm at any given time. According to the description of the abidharma, birth into any of the realms is a matter of a sixtieth of a second. And here the concepts of time are also dependent on the involvement in ignorance.

The human realm is said to be the land of karma, because human beings can perceive and work with the karmic force. In this realm, suffering is of the nature of dissatisfaction. The intelligence of human nature itself becomes a source of endless pain. Deliberate self-inflicted struggles lead to the pain of birth, growing up, illness, and death. The constant search for pleasure and its failure pushes the inquisitive intelligence into neurosis. But certain karmic coincidences bring the possibility of realizing the uselessness of struggling, and these coincidences are the particular attribute of the human realm. Therefore the human realm presents the rare opportunity of hearing the dharma and practicing it. The solid body and seemingly real situations act as a vessel to preserve the

Buddha's teaching, whereas the other realms are so exclusively involved with their own extreme situations that the dharma cannot be heard, and changes happen only as the karmic force of the hallucinations wears out.

The hungry ghost realm is one of an intense state of grasping in the midst of a continual, overwhelming psychological poverty. The definition of hunger in this case is the fear of letting go. There are three types of hungry ghost: the external veil, the internal veil, and the individualist veil. The external veil comes as a result of too much accumulation. You long to become hungrier so you can accumulate even more. The internal veil is having been able to accumulate whatever you want and then the end product becoming something unexpected, usually turning into the reverse, so that the satisfaction turns into dissatisfaction. The individualistic veil is trying any possible way of satisfying your hang-ups, but then a disappointment of a different nature comes in unexpectedly. Things attack from every direction—wanting and not wanting. This is the state of conflicting emotions.

On the whole, the pain of this realm is not so much that of not finding what you want; rather it is the frustration of wanting itself, which causes excruciating pain.

The stupidity of the animal realm is more that of laziness than that of actual dullness. It contains the refusal to venture onto new ground. There is a tendency to cling to the familiar situation and to fight your way through to still another familiar goal, but this does not contain openness or dance. Another quality of the animal realm is that whenever there is an overpowering force which might lead you to explore new territory, the immediate reaction is to play dead or to camouflage yourself as though you were not there. The stubbornness of this realm regards individual involvement as very precious, and you are intoxicated with yourself.

The realm of hell is not only the extreme of aggression and its passionate quality but extends beyond the extreme. This extension backlashes and creates not only a force of energy, but also an all-pervasive environment which is so intense that even the wildness of anger itself finds it unbearable to exist. Therefore there is a tendency to try and escape, and that notion of escape intensifies the imprisonment. Two images have been used to describe this realm. One is intense heat, which creates helplessness, and the realization at the same time that you are radiating this heat yourself. And trying to find a way to turn off the heat

becomes too claustrophobic. The other image is intense cold. Any movement toward trying to solve the problem is irritatingly painful; therefore you try to internalize the intense aggression, to freeze it. Although it no longer cuts with a sharp edge in this case, its blunt edge hurts instead.

There is a tendency to commit suicide for the relief of a change of scene, but each moment of change and repetitive birth seems to take millions of years in this realm of hallucinations. There is not a moment to spare for anything other than your own existence in hell. Basically it could be said that because of such paranoia, the pain increases greatly. The process does not allow you a moment for preparation or even to get involved in each instant; there is no pulsation to the pain—it is constant.

The realm of the gods, also known as heaven, is the product of self-indulgence in ideal pleasure. This realm has different degrees; each degree of intensity of pleasure is based on corresponding degrees of maintenance of the pleasure and fear of losing it. The joy of "meditative" absorption saturates your seemingly solid body so that the basic energy is completely undermined. There are occasional flashes of thought which irritate and bring a tremendous threat to the meditative intoxication. Basically the reason why the realm of the gods is regarded as an impermanent state is that it is based on ego's game of maintenance in which the meditation is a separate experience from your own being. When the karmic situation of being in heaven wears out, there are suddenly violent thoughts accompanied by suspicion, and the whole blissful state collapses, including the self-conscious concepts of love and the security of being "in love"; another hallucination takes control and you are in another realm.

In the realm of the asuras, or jealous gods, the ambition of gaining a victory or the fear of losing a battle provide a sense of being alive as well as causing irritation. You lose the point of an ultimate goal, but in order to keep the driving force, you have to maintain the ambition. There is a constant desire to be the best, but the sense of losing your game is too real. There is an occasional tendency to punish yourself, so that you learn to strive away from the pain. Whenever you see any pleasurable, appealing situations they seem to be too distant. The desire to bring them close to you is overwhelming, so finally the whole world is built out of golden promises; but it is irritating even to venture to fulfill them.

Sometimes you tend to condemn yourself for not striving for strict discipline and for not achieving the satisfaction of these promises.

This brings us to the center of the wheel of life, which is seen as the path. Having experienced the monotonous and familiar games of the six realms of the world and having heard the buddhadharma, the truth of pain and the reality of suffering as you have experienced them now bring primordial mind into a state of doubt. At the same time the conclusion arises as a possibility that after all, "things may be just as they are." At that moment the subtler message of the first noble truth begins to click and you are about to sense the meaning of all those useless ventures into the false occupation of ego. The first step is bewilderment, where the teaching is too potent and too true. It seems impossible to be so precise and accurate. It almost feels like a personal insult that there are certain awakened minds and that their teaching can communicate to your basic nature. There is a sense that you have been careless and not able to keep up your secrets.

The first hearing of the teaching is a shock. The sense of inhibition is broken through and therefore personal preservation through ignorance does not apply anymore. Traditionally that ignorance, that deliberate ignoring, is symbolized by the ignoramus pig with its built-in blinkers. It is nondiscriminating perception which relates purely to the sense of survival expressed by consuming whatever comes up, whatever is presented to be consumed.

But that nondiscrimination becomes grasping before the comfortable, snug ignorance finds its place. So this confused venture of passion is depicted in the symbol of the rooster. Passion feels inadequate, so it presents its spiky, sharp points in order to lure like a fishhook, to draw in so that it consumes and attracts attention at the same time. This display by the rooster of its colorful feathers, as well as its beak, can draw in the object of passion; so passion is seen as eliminating the beauty of the phenomenal world. Passion draws in these beauties by a succession of games. Where there is any possible threat to the success of drawing in, it appears that the only possible way of accomplishing the process is to subjugate the object of passion—either by putting out poison to paralyze it or else by overpowering it. This is much the way a snake would proceed, either projecting poison through its fangs or else coiling around that object of desire until it has been completely subdued. Thus the snake is the symbol of aggression. So the whole pattern of aggression

and passion is seen as capturing that which is close or else destroying that which is beyond your control. This pattern is at the center of the wheel.

The essence of samsara is found in this turmoil, in this complex situation, as well as in the misunderstandings of bewilderment, passion, and aggression, so the situation also provides the possible means of eliminating these aggravations. But at the same time, unless you relate to these three as path—understanding them, working with them, treading on them—you do not discover the goal. So therefore, as Buddha says, "Suffering should be realized, origin should be overcome and, by that, cessation should be realized because the path should be seen as the truth." Seeing the truth as it is, is the goal as well as the path. For that matter, discovering the truth of samsara *is* the discovery of nirvana, for truth does not depend on other formulae or alternative answers. The reality of samsara is equally the reality of nirvana. This truth is seen as one truth without relativity.

Seven Characteristics of a Dharmic Person

TONIGHT WE WILL go through the seven characteristics of a dharmic person, which refers to how we can actually relate with ourselves in that vein. Such lists are very traditional. They are also connected with how our forefathers in the Kagyü lineage practiced their discipline fully. These lists were taught by the Buddha himself to his own monks. They represent a long-standing tradition of discipline. They are connected with how we can train ourselves and how we can actually organize our livelihood, how we can create a society of some kind.

PASSIONLESSNESS

Number one is passionlessness, which is an interesting theme for Westerners. You have all kinds of possibilities of organizing and creating occupations—from chewing gum to taking trips to the Bahamas. You are always looking for ways to solve your boredom, your boredom *problem.* In contrast, passionlessness means experiencing boredom properly and fully. You don't immediately fill the gap with all kinds of things. You might have an itch on your hip because you realize that you have several packages of chewing gum in your pocket. You want to take some out and put it in your mouth.

Here in the West, whenever you have that itch, you reach right away for your gum. You are in such a hurry that you can't even open the package properly: you just dump the gum into your mouth and chew it. [*Laughter*] And when the weather is cold, you can't stand even a few

seconds of chill; you must rush into your bedroom and get a sweater and put it on right away. If your tea is not all that good, if it is slightly bitter, you automatically reach for the sugar pot and put several more spoonfuls of sugar into your tea.

Things like that are a problem; you have not been properly taught any way of dealing with boredom. You are not able to stand that kind of hardship properly. We are not particularly talking about extreme cases: starving to death or freezing to death. We are not talking about going to extremes but about some sense of levelness in your life.

In Western society, when any little irritation comes up, there is always something to cure it. They even sell little pads to stick on your spectacles to keep them from sliding down, so that they will stay on your nose properly. From little things like pads for your spectacles to the biggest of the biggest, as long as anybody can afford it, the Western approach is to cure any kind of boredom, any kind of irritation at all. So passion is connected with being unable to relate with boredom—needing some kind of sustaining power. And a practitioner is someone who can maintain himself, who can relate with boredom.

Contentment

Number two is contentment. You have some feeling that you don't have to expand yourself, that you are contained in your own existence. So contentment is very close to passionlessness and to overcoming the notion of laziness.

Contentment is also connected with appreciating what you have, with some sense of rejoicing, which is often very hard. You are constantly involved with possibilities of change, all the time changing from one thing to another. You cannot celebrate your own life as what you have, what you are. You are unable to celebrate the simplicity of the practice itself and the simplicity of life. But being contented with what you have *is* a celebration.

Supposing you feel an itch in your pocket, but you don't have any chewing gum on that particular day. You should feel contented; you should feel relieved. "For heaven's sake, I don't have any chewing gum! That's fine." A chance to appreciate that simplicity has been presented to you. Ordinarily, people talk in terms of obstacles: "I had a bad time. I

didn't have any chewing gum in my pocket. I had a bad day." [*Laughter*] But you could switch gears altogether: "It was such a relief to find that I didn't have any chewing gum in my pocket. I feel fine; I just let go."

You can have some appreciation of obstacles becoming simplicity. Maybe you didn't get your liquor order today, and maybe you feel irritated by that. But on the other hand, that simplifies your life. You could experience some sense of celebration at that point, instead of blaming it on somebody else or on yourself or on the environment.

Preventing Too Many Activities

Number three is preventing too many activities, or you could say, reducing too many activities. According to tradition, that actually boils down to cutting nonfunctional talking, cutting the baby-sitter mentality, the entertainment mentality. You can get yourself into all kinds of projects, all kinds of engagements. You can become chummy with the world so that you don't have to hold your discipline, or your mindfulness, properly. You can jump from A to B to Z; you can just launch in, you just flip the pages and you have your thing prepared already. If you don't like tea, you can have coffee. If you don't like coffee, you could switch to Coca-Cola. If you don't like Coca-Cola, you can drink scotch or tequila.

You involve yourself in constant, constant activity. Sometimes you don't even know what you are doing, you just come up with the idea that you need to be occupied with something, but you can't put your finger on anything: "Do I need sex or do I need money or do I need clothes? What do I need?" You feel like you need something . . . companionship? . . . One never knows.

It's like going to a bookstore: you don't know exactly whether you should read a magazine or a novel or whether you should buy—what do you call it?—*Playboy* or the other one—what is it called? You busy yourself with lots of activities. Usually, people have access to all those things; they occupy their whole life that way. People have problems with that a lot.

In fact, you have an immediate problem right here in this room where you are sitting. You might begin to choose which color to look at: whether you should look at the white or the black or the purple or the green or at the floral design. You are making choices all the time. At

the same time you might be thinking of which fantasies to dwell on: your future; your past; your desire for food; the eccentricities of your friends and relatives; or various creative activities like sex, cooking, or buying clothes. You could think about anything; the possibilities are infinite.

Getting chummy with the situation involves lots of activity. According to the hinayana principle, you have to cut that down. When you become too chummy with your world, too familiar with your world, it becomes endless. You can study the whole thing and learn to be even more chummy—with things that you have never even heard of, never even thought of.

You can read about all kinds of things or you can ask your friends; there are infinite possibilities. That can actually lead you to suicide. You finally have everything—if you are all that good at being chummy with the world—you have a complete collection. And when you have collected the whole thing, it will drive you mad. You will end up taking your own life because the whole thing is too much: you can't possibly do it all and you begin to feel that you are not capable of doing even one thing properly. That is the basic problem with materialism.

Good Conduct

Number four is good conduct, which is quite straightforward. It is a sense of mindfulness and awareness: whatever you are doing, you should try to see it as an extension of your sitting practice—your general sense of awareness and your refraining from too much activity. "Awareness" sounds like a problem. Ordinarily, when people talk about developing awareness, they mean being cautious, being careful. But ladies and gentlemen, I can convince you that when we talk about basic awareness, it is a question of waking up—simply waking up.

By the way, the opposite of waking up is falling asleep. That kind of sleep is not usually very pleasant. It's very sweaty and energy-consuming; it downgrades you. It is like putting your head in the sand and trying to hide—ostrich-style. This kind of sleep is avoiding the possibility of any realization at all; you just feel bad about yourself and about the consequences of your existence, which is not as glamorous as you would like it to be.

But I don't think you should be embarrassed about yourselves; there are all kinds of possibilities of celebrating. You could be so sharp or—we could even use such a simple phrase as that you could be so smart that you could look at yourself and smile. You could be awake and aware and, at the same time, on the spot.

Constant sunrise happens. You reflect that yourself, and you always look awake and aware of what you are doing. That is good conduct. You respect yourself and you respect the sacredness of your whole being, your whole existence. When you have that kind of self-respect, you don't spill your tea or put your shoes on the wrong feet. You appreciate the weather, your coffee, your tea, your clothes, your shower. There is a tremendous sense that for the first time you have become a real human being and you can actually appreciate the world around you. That appreciation comes from being aware. So awareness is not necessarily self-conscious; it is simply looking at what you're doing.

Awareness of the Teacher

Number five is awareness of the teacher and of other realized people who you are studying with. The idea is to be without shyness and to be able to relate with your teacher (who in the hinayana tradition is an elder) as somebody who has accomplished the path already. Because you are without shyness, you could relate with the teacher and emulate him properly and fully. You have some sense of appreciation that you are and will be part of a certain tradition, a certain discipline. You have as an example a teacher who is behaving in a way that you should behave, and you have some sense of sacredness in studying and listening to the teacher.

Propagating Prajna

Number six is propagating prajna, or your intellect, fully and thoroughly. That is to say, you should find out and understand who you are and what you are made of. You should find out what your mind is made out of, what your mind's projections are made out of, and what your relationship with your world is made out of.

According to the theistic tradition, you committed a big sin right at

the beginning. That big sin is called "original sin." Because of that, many possibilities have been completely cut down. Therefore you have to purify that sin, and only then *might* you have a decent chance. You might or you might not. Maybe you could go from purgatory to heaven. That myth can be wiped out by realizing and studying how your mind can be unwound by undoing what you are. There are positive and good qualities, or basic goodness, in everybody.

Sometimes in your study of the dharma, you are given long lists of things, and sometimes the way things work is explained very mechanistically and intellectually. But that approach is very helpful. You should understand the teachings logically: why you are here, why you have five skandhas, why you are what you are. That is good.

Attitude of Goodness

Number seven, the last one, is a basic attitude of goodness, or a general sense of goodness, which comes from your own practice and discipline. There is nothing to say about it, particularly, except keep on sitting and you will find out that both sanity and insanity exist in you. Insanity is not particularly regarded as an obstacle; it is simply regarded as kindling wood. Because of your insanity, you are here. But you don't stop there; you go beyond and you brighten up greater sanity by sitting and perfectly watching your activities.

So the hinayana approach has nothing to do with big explosions of enlightenment, big orgasms of enlightenment on the spot. We are talking about paying attention to details and to your mind and to your behavior pattern. When you wake up and before you fall asleep, just look and be genuine; you can't fool yourself.

If you have been attempting to fool yourself, please don't. It won't work; it will be suicidal. In fact it won't even be suicidal. The purpose of suicide is to kill yourself and put an end to consciousness. But in fact you will experience constant torture. You can't even kill yourself. There's no way to cut your torture by destroying your body. There's no way to stop anything. The whole thing goes on all the time.

I wish we could talk to people who have committed suicide. I wish we could bring them back here and ask them what happened in their bardo states. They must have had a tremendous disappointment. They

must have realized they couldn't just kill the whole thing by one little "pop."

So you need to develop some sense of appreciation, and you need to reduce your demands and stick to the point, or realize the need for very good toilet training. Please forgive me—I'm not insulting anybody here by saying that you are not toilet trained. It could be seen as a compliment that you need a higher level of toilet training; that is something you should look for. There is tremendous cause for celebration if you could be toilet trained at a higher level.

These guys [*points to the shrine*], these lineage fathers, including my own teacher, were fully toilet trained. We are just at the point of deciding whether we should apply some kind of diaper or just let it drool on the carpet. That is the basic hinayana approach—very much so.

I think we can do it; we can pull that off and actually relate with ourselves fully and properly. We could be fully toilet trained, with smiles on our faces.

Questions, if you like?

Q: Rinpoche, when you were talking about taming oneself, you differentiated behaving and acting. Could you elaborate on that, please?

V: I think it's quite straightforward, actually. Acting is not behaving. Acting is trying to manifest yourself for the sake of display, and behaving is how you feel. Do you see what I mean? Acting is connected with the way you dance, and behaving is connected with the way you sneeze or hiccup.

Q: When you were talking about acting and behaving, the point seemed to be that one could be a genuine person. But how can I really tell whether or not I am being genuine?

V: That's purely up to you, sweetheart. You know it; you are the first person who knows it. Beyond that, you have various channels to release that particular news to the public. When you are acting, you are more concerned with other people's possible reactions to you; but when you are behaving, you are just behaving *yourself.* It's like sitting on the toilet seat and doing your duty on it; nobody's watching how many pieces of toilet tissue you use. It's your private concern, so there is some sense of genuineness and of putting out. Your guess is as good as mine, sweetheart.

Dharmas without Blame

As is said in all Buddhist teachings, the mind constantly lives in bewilderment and ignorance. Dharmas are the living teachings of clarity appearing spontaneously in all sorts of life situations. But dharmas are not only the means toward clarity; they are also the sense of clarity already existing in the aspirant. In the primitive approach to spirituality, there is a confusion between the means and the one who is applying them.

According to the *Samadhiraja Sutra,* living in the dharmas rather than as the dharmas is a mistaken approach. In an approach in which there is a sense of separation between the teachings and the practitioner, there is no delight; only earnestness, struggle, search. Ego-oriented mind, always seeking some sort of satisfaction, teaches us to act as hungry crows. Even the spiritual search takes the form of a hungry crow. Some belief has been adopted, either from reading sacred writings or taking to heart the example of some master. Taking on this belief might produce delight or conviction, but at the same time there is the sense of your covered, embarrassed parts.

In this view, spirituality is allied with goodness, a goodness which will surely destroy the evil it faces. But you feel that if you don't maintain your allegiance to this goodness, you are subject to destruction. On the whole, this primitive approach is based on a sense of security, the feeling that you belong to the right teaching, the right club. Because you relate to the teachings as a means or a goal or an atmosphere separate from yourself, their impact is dulled.

Praising to Confirm

Perhaps the magic that you expected does not present itself. The sense of the monotony of your practice grows. You secretly suspect that you are losing the faith. You may try to start a new campaign to regain your faith. On the other hand, perhaps you find getting sucked into the divine will of this teaching frightening in the beginning. But then the magic does present itself and you become a true believer in it and transmit your discovery to others. In either case, there is a sense of great security, and you praise the mysterious perfection of your teaching. This leads to a certain calm or a certain energy which is not entirely sound. You find you have constantly to communicate to others about the teaching in order to sustain your beaming smile or constant sternness.

Counterfeiting the Teachings

In the process that could be called counterfeiting the teachings, you still have the fever, the fervor of the true believer, but you haven't set up your livelihood in the teachings quite yet. You still have to develop your style and create your establishment. At this point, you lose your sense of friendship, personal contact. Meeting an old friend is very awkward. You regard the whole world as your prey. Whether friends or relatives, all are subject to your consumption. You have become strange to yourself. Your only reference point, the only way you can have of reassuring yourself, is constant checking with the appropriate holy scriptures or the great master who converted you originally. You regard your strangeness as some miraculous gift of progress. Public speaking and conducting intensive rituals become a means of perpetuating it and surviving its threat.

Having completely committed yourself to the teachings, you now feel free to put forward your own version. You might well break away from your first master at this point, because he fails to acknowledge your growth. Your teaching style now becomes royal command—either obey or get out. You have no sense of friendship with life at all.

At this point genuine insight is impossible. You are constantly fed by the world you are projecting. Sometimes administrative work in the organization, as some form of sanity, might bring you down to earth. But even that is dressed up as a mode of development. As you go further

and further into the texture of this drama, your sanity becomes precarious. The sense of wretchedness becomes overwhelming—should you declare yourself a teacher or somehow get out of the whole thing? Further confirmation in your spiritual role now might bring you to the point of complete insensitivity. You would no longer question yourself. You might feel reassured, but you would have merely returned to the original bewilderment of trying to achieve egohood. You might then appear to others to be quite calm, poised, highly accomplished, but really you are just being thick. The whole thing is an act of cowardice.

The Lion's Roar

Buddha's message that there is such a thing as cutting through bewilderment and confusion is the Lion's Roar. In the Madhyamaka teachings, Nagarjuna speaks of severing the aorta of heresy. Faith is the readiness to expose whatever is concealed. You don't have to conceal doubts by putting on patches of self-confirmation. This readiness to be exposed seems to make the difference between ego's approach to spirituality and an enlightened one.

Cutting through confusion is an easy matter if we know what to cut. In tantric philosophy, it is said that the destruction of ego is the spontaneous action of enlightened energy. Here, the Lion's Roar is not a roar of victory, but a roar that mocks ego's deception. There is no room for the further confirmation of concealing, for the Lion's Roar is constant cutting through, constant exposing of one deception after another. Therefore cutting through need not be strategized. On the contrary, what is needed is the constant unmasking of ego's strategy. The spirituality of a bodhisattva or a tantric vidyadhara is a continual unmasking rather than a manufacturing of anything. In the case of the bodhisattva, this unmasking is gentle. Understanding the depth of ego produces depth of knowledge (prajna). Prajna is the understanding that cuts through ego's game. but possession of this understanding still offers a sense of confirmation.

In the case of the tantric vidyadhara, unmasking is a violent eruption. As the unmasking process brings a certain form of confirmation, the tantric approach is to unreasonably uproot it.

In Buddhism, there is no magic, but there is a mystical approach. This

has nothing to do with divinity. In this case, mysticism is realizing the true nature of ego.

Dharmas Are without Blame

Dharmas are without blame because there was no manufacturer of dharmas. Dharmas are simply what is. Blame comes from an attitude of security, identifying with certain reservations as to how things are. Having this attitude, if a spiritual teaching does not supply us with enough patches, we are in trouble. The Buddhist teaching not only does not supply us with any patches, it destroys them.

As ego's patches are destroyed, there comes a point where relating with the teaching means the continual death of ego. But ego always wants to witness and appreciate its own death. As long as there is a business of being without patches, there is still a reason for new patches to be created. The affirmation of patchlessness is a new patch, therefore there is a continual need for death. As scientific logic tells us, if there is death, then that automatically means the birth of something else, unless there is no mind to experience either. This vicious circle continues until at some point it becomes such an accurate dance that a sense of refreshing delight begins to pervade each moment. Succumbing to the dance, delight in nonmindness is the way of stepping out of the vicious circle of ego.

Therefore the teaching of dharmas without blame should be regarded as good news. It seems that it is good news, utterly good news, because there is no choice. Praise and blame are conditioned experiences of beautiful patchwork. There is no choice but to accept things as they are. Now suppose you are cornered and have no choice—you begin to realize there is another alternative of alternativelessness. This opens a new dimension of space, but this is not a space of security. The philosophy of Zen might say that the choicelessness of sitting in zazen is the only choice.

It is you who instigated the idea of security in the first place, and it is you who asked for the patches. You are the inventor of the whole process.

There is an approach in which the idea of patches has never occurred. If you ask for a patch, since the idea has never occurred, it couldn't be

communicated. From that point of view, blame doesn't exist, because there is no praise.

In the Buddhist approach to spirituality, unmasking is the only way. If you ask for an artificial mask so that you can enjoy the ceremony of being unmasked, it is still ego's devious game. So we cannot blame the unmasker for not doing a complete job. Unmasking, or unfacing for that matter, must be found in ourselves.

Buddhadharma without Credentials

Let us present the definition of buddhadharma. In the sutras, *dharma* is referred to as the "path" and "that which is knowable." It is "passionlessness." Passion in this case refers to the dualistic fixations of the ego, which has two aspects. The first aspect is the ego of conceptualized confusion—the notion of other, that form exists. The second is the ego of personality—if form exists, then there must be a perceiver of the form, an individual knower. These two aspects of ego are mutually dependent and constitute the samsaric mind. The seeming existence of other is a continually repeated proof of the existence of I, which is actually another other. I does not exist but takes the seeming existence of form as its credentials. The existence of form, credentials, is what maintains the illusion of I. Thus, if a person is self-righteously claiming to practice the buddhadharma, is using his practice as credentials, then he is simply playing ego's game. If a group of people do this together, then they reinforce each other in the same game. Inevitably they will pick a leader. Then the leader will have as his credentials the title "head of the flock." The members of the flock will have as their credentials the title "member of such-and-such organization." The leader and his flock reinforce each other's identities. As is said in the *Sutra of the Treasury of Buddha,* "If someone teaches with ignorance, it is worse than if he took the lives of the inhabitants of three universes, because his ability to teach the dharma is impure." Inevitably this organization, this collective ego, will look for further confirmation of its health and existence. It may even take as its credentials the transmission of the lineage, the teachings of the great masters, but it will be a prostitution of those teachings. It will involve itself in the ever-escalating game of one-upmanship in order to

enlarge its congregation. This one-upmanship may take the form of collecting endorsements and diplomas, as well as the form of ambitious practice and adherence to the teachings. It will also see the success of rivals as a threat. The Buddha said that his teachings, like a lion, would never be destroyed by outsiders; it could only be destroyed from within like a lion's corpse consumed by maggots. This is the perversion of sangha. It is the dark-age style of spirituality, the operation of spiritual materialism. Regarding the dharma as the path, great buddhadharma institutions, such as Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Samye, were founded on the basis of three types of evolution or "wheels." The first is the wheel of meditation, the second is the wheel of learning, and the third is the wheel of action. Meditation is the practice of stepping out of ego's game of constantly reaffirming its own existence. Study is the critical intellectual examination of ego's mode of operation. Action is the application of the other two in everyday life situations. From this point of view, maintenance of the organization, reliance on credentials, becomes irrelevant. Nothing external is needed; things-as-they-are are their own proof, self-existing. As Shantideva describes in the *Bodhicharyavatara,* "Listening to the buddhadharma is joyous and inviting, because it does not need further ambition." There is no drive to accumulate credentials. The Dharma does not demand rigidity, adherence to external ideals. If a teacher understand this, he needs no confirmation from his students. The turning of the wheel of dharma will be a mutual creation on the part of student and teacher.

Compassion

I WOULD LIKE TO repeat things again and again and again, until you get them into your skulls completely. [*Laughter*] That seems to be my duty, passing on that familiarity with vajrayana discipline.

The mahayanists' experience of reality and how they work with reality completely and fully is bounded by several categories, naturally. But these categories all combine into one basic point: the notion of compassion, or karuna. In fact, there is a hidden continuity that goes through the entire path right from the beginning. The hinayana aspect of compassion is nonaggression, as we know. The essence of hinayana discipline being—do you remember?

Audience: No harm to others.

Rinpoche: No harm to others. That's right. Yes. This is the beginning of the continuity of compassion, in some sense. The continuation of that compassion in the mahayana sense is doing good for others. So at this point we could say that the definition of one's mind following the dharma is the same as the definition of one's mind mixing with dharma. The reason it becomes very simple and comforting for us to practice gentleness and to mix our minds with dharma in the mahayana path is largely because of genuine egolessness—or for that matter, potential genuine egolessness. That potentiality arises out of some sense of being willing to get into the discipline, obviously. If we are unable to get into the discipline fully and properly, then we seem to have a problem. We tend to cook up unnecessary ego trips, justifying ourselves in the name of the dharma. But I would not like anybody to do that.

There is a sense of delight, as well as of egolessness, in the regular

discipline of karuna. Fundamentally speaking, that sense of delight is present right from the beginning of the hinayana and mahayana paths when we begin to feel some sense of joy, some sense of purpose, and some sense of strength—actual strength, the actual existence of strength. That strength is a confirmation of your own individual joy in having the right person to work with you, the right teacher; the right discipline or right procedures of discipline; and also the right conviction, faith. It is a sense of highness, if we could use such a word. *Highness,* in this case, is not so much tripping out, but simply a basic, genuine appreciation of the teachings. You feel somewhat delightful about the whole thing. In other words, you feel fundamentally good. The notion of faith goes along with that. Feeling fundamentally good comes from the notion that we no longer have any little pockets of deception. In fact, we have become bankrupt of reserves of any kind. We have been squeezed and fundamentally we have given up.

Here's an interesting and cute story about myself. When I was about ten years old, I was studying the Kadam slogans with my teacher. And in spite of the overwhelming presence of my tutors, who were very nasty (usually they are), I felt somewhat relieved that I had nothing to do but to take pride in the dharma. There was no other entertainment for me—I could just simply take pride in whatever I understood. I felt extremely relieved that I could be gentle. I realized that, if I pushed, I would be pushed back. And I felt very good about the whole thing. And I have felt that way ever since then, through my childhood and my adulthood, up until the present situation. We talked the other day about the notion of blame. That is part of that whole thing. I feel extremely good that I'm a practitioner, that I'm following the path of the bodhisattva, and that I am a nontheistic Buddhist. Eternally, I feel grateful and good. Well, to make a long story short, so to speak—I personally feel that you should share what I feel. You should have a firsthand account of how it feels to be captured by the dharma, to be squeezed into a corner, into the dharmic world, and helplessly to be pushed in. Obviously, you people have more choices than I did—you can skip out and go to Miami Beach, join the war department, become mafiosi or whatever, or just be regular naive people. However, some kind of situation of being cornered is also happening to you as individuals at this point. So I am sharing with you what I used to experience, what I did experience for a while, which was that I was cornered. Of course, later on when students

came to me, I began to realize that I was the corner and the students were being pushed in. But that is a slightly different situation.

The slogan which goes with that is: "Always rely on just a happy frame of mind." In this case, actually, the Tibetan literally means "Continuously maintain joyful satisfaction." That means that every mishap is good, because it is encouragement for you to practice the dharma. Other people's mishaps are good also: you should share them, you should bring them into yourself as being the continuity of their practice, discipline. So you should include that in turn. It's too nice to feel that way, actually. For myself, there is some sense of actual joy. You feel so good and so high. I suppose I was converted into Buddhism. And I was so convinced, that although I was not sticking bumper stickers on my car saying "Jesus saved me," I was doing that mentally. Mentally I was putting on bumper stickers saying "I'm glad that I've been converted, that my ego is converted into Buddhism, and that I've been accepted and realized as a Buddhist citizen, a bodhicitta person, a compassionate person." I used to feel extraordinarily good and so rewarded. But from where [any reward came] was no question at that point, particularly. I felt so strong and strengthened by the whole thing. In fact, I began to feel that, if I didn't have that kind of encouragement in myself, I would have a lot of difficulty studying the vajrayana disciplines at all. I felt so grateful, so good; there was some sense of joy taking place in my personal individual life. So, to sum up, the slogan "Always rely on just a happy frame of mind" means to maintain a sense of satisfaction and joyfulness in spite of all the little knickknacks, problems, and hassles which take place in one's life.

Next seems to be the beginning of the concept of compassion. The warmth and sympathy of compassion that we are talking about is that same sense of joyfulness. It is that same sense of delight that you can actually get high within your situation, that you are actually able to do such a thing. Tonight's discussion is based purely on how to go about maintaining our awareness of the practice of mahayana literally and fully. You might feel uptight about somebody's terrible bad job, that his particular bad trip has been transferred on to you and has messed up the whole environment. But in this case, you don't blame such a person. What you do is blame yourself as we've talked about already. And blaming yourself is a delightful thing to do, because you begin to realize that that whole approach is taking a very cheerful attitude toward the whole

thing. You are not particularly pushed into the depths of the ghetto of human punishment any longer. So you are transcending any kind of "oy vey" situation—and getting out of Brooklyn [*laughter*], metaphorically speaking. This is virtually the opposite of the oy vey approach. You could do that; it is possible to do that.

This kind of cheerfulness has a lot of guts; at the same time, it is founded in buddha nature, tathagatagarbha. It is founded in the basic compassion of the people in the past who have done such a thing: people like Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, Jamgön Kongtrül, Mila, Marpa, and all the rest of the gang. They have already done such a thing. So we could do it ourselves. It is founded on a real situation. If someone punches you in the mouth and says, "You are terrible," you should be grateful that such a person has actually acknowledged you and said so. You could, in fact, respond with tremendous dignity by saying, "Thank you, I appreciate your concern." In that way his neurosis has been taken over by you, taken onto you, much as is done in the maitri bhavana practice. We will be doing that practice later on, so you will know about that whole thing. There is an immense sacrifice thing place here. And if you think this is somewhat ridiculously trippy, you are right. In some sense, the whole thing is ridiculously trippy. But on the other hand, if somebody doesn't begin that approach of providing some kind of harmony and sanity, we can't develop sanity in this world at all. Somebody has to plant some kind of fruit or seed, so that such sanity can happen on this earth. And we are those people—the chosen people, if you would like to call it that—quite proudly. We are the inspired Buddhists who have the truth and the conviction and power to transplant the root of compassion into the land where we belong, where we were born.

The other day I was talking to a close friend of mine, and she said that originally she felt that she had the kernel of insanity in her, so she didn't want to push too hard. If she pushed too hard, that kernel of insanity would begin to grow and become gigantic, a monumental monster just like her mother. That is a very good starting point for the discovery of buddha nature. I thought it was very good, extremely good. Starting from there, we begin to feel wretched, right? We feel terrible, absolutely absurd and stupid and mean. And because of that sense of meanness, wretchedness, deprivation, and terribleness, something begins to grow out of it. My friend had enough guts to tell me how she felt, which I thought was the essence of tathagatagarbha. She was willing to

relate with somebody and to communicate that. She actually felt that [her experience] was an analogy for something which she used to believe and which quite possibly she could rediscover. That kernel of neurosis in the depth of the depths of her being was softness, which is all-joyful. At that point, pain and pleasure are mixed together. And pleasure is basically more powerful than pain at that point. I felt quite proud of my friend who said that—it was very good. It meant that there was some basis for someone to work on. Usually what happens is that people philosophize the whole thing, and you can't actually get a hold on anything. But she was able to say, "This thing is happening in me. I feel terrible." I was able to hold on to it, and she was able to hold on to it. That was the basis of our communication, and buddha nature was actually the pith or kernel of it. And that buddha nature is beginning to grow up at this point, hour by hour, day by day, right now.

The next important slogan that you have studied already in last year's transcripts is "If you can handle whatever comes across to you, that is the mark of perfect practice." Maybe we could give a better translation for that: "If you can do it while you're distracted, that is the mark of perfect practice." That seems to be the point where we begin to realize that we can actually practice in spite of our wandering thoughts. I'm sorry to be such a chauvinist, but let me give an example of that. What used to happen was that I was terribly hurt—psychologically depressed and pushed into dark corners—by my good tutor and by my administration in Surmang monastery. When I was more remorseful, more sad, and more helpless—but carefully helpless, deliberately helpless—I used to think of Jamgön Kongtrül and actually, literally weep. After he departed from Surmang monastery, I kept thinking of him, and he actually did something to me, cheered me up. I used to try the vajrayana approach to devotion, and I would say to all my attendants, "Go out. I don't need to observe tea time at this point; I'm going to read." Then I used to lie back and just purely cry for thirty minutes or sometimes forty-five minutes. And then somebody would jump up. They became very worried, thinking that I was sick or something. And I would say, "Send them back. Go away. I don't need any more tea." But somehow I found that that was not very effective, that it was too early to introduce vajrayana devotion, because we didn't have enough basic training. So I developed a new tactic, which was purely in accordance with this slogan. Whenever there was some problem or chaos, I told Jamgön Kongtrül

about it when I visited him. And when I came back, I began to use a new method. Whenever there was chaos or a problem, or even when there was goodness or some celebration—whenever anything happened—I would just come back to my existence and my memory of him, as well as my memory of the path and the practice. I began to be able to feel some sense of awareness, quick awareness, very direct awareness. This awareness was not necessarily related particularly with the memory of Jamgön Kongtrül. But it was the awareness that comes just when you are drifting off and the process of drifting brings you back. That's what it means here. In other words, even if you are drifting off, if that process of drifting off can bring you back, that is the mark of perfect practice—traditionally, that is described as being like a good horse that has been trained completely and precisely in the equestrian world. Such a good horse has a good gait, good feet, good leaps, and good jumps; and he has good composure in his muscles, with his neck, hindquarters, and everything working together. So if such a good horse slipped on the ice, mud, or something like that—automatically, because of the goodness and coordination of his muscles in his neck, body, and hindquarters—such a good horse would prevent itself from falling on the ground.

That brings about the notion of compassion, which is actually being both soft to oneself and disciplined with oneself. It is actually not particularly a big problem for us personally to be so at this point, although we are not all that highly developed spiritually. Although we have not achieved twofold egolessness, or one-and-a-half-fold egolessness particularly at the point, nevertheless we are actually able to practice mahayana completely and fully. And in a lot of our interpersonal relationships, interofficial relationships, inter-dharmadhatu relationships, intersexual relationships, interbusiness relationships, or whatever relationships we have, that approach is very applicable. Mahayana practice is actually applicable. It helped me a lot personally, so I can say that much. And seemingly you are the same sort of human beings as myself—hopefully. Nobody is a Martian or a weirdo here. I don't think so. So that whole approach is completely applicable. And in the process of presenting mahayana teaching—which I would like to present to you, and which I have been presenting to you—I would like actually to get down to floor-level as much as possible.

The main point is that we're not trying to make you into monumental, monolithic robots of Buddhism—but good Buddhist persons who

could actually tame their minds or are willing to tame their minds and attitudes fully to the practice of the dharma. So this is our only chance actually to present the possibilities of a Buddhist evangelical approach. It is an evangelical approach, if you would like to look at it that way. But please don't regard that particular term in a negative way, a pejorative way. In this case, to your surprise, we actually do need Buddhist evangelical people—not so much for converting others, but for converting ourselves. So we do need a Buddhist evangelical approach. And I would actually like to see a difference in you after our seminary is over. I would like basically to see your individuality transformed, changed, into the gentleness of the bodhisattva's approach. You might think that hearing about vajrayana will help you to get off on something. But if you don't have that mahayana outlook, it doesn't help. So I want you to understand the mahayanist's approach of taming one's ego. That is very important, very, very important—extremely important. I think you can do it, but it is a matter of giving in. You actually can do so. If that does not take place properly and fully in all of us, I will have greater difficulty in presenting the vajrayana. It would be very sad, in some sense, if I could not tell you the whole truth fully and completely. That whole truth comes from what we have discussed already. Our understanding of the mahayana depends on hinayana—everybody knows that, right? Similarly, our understanding of the mahayana brings us a lot closer to understanding the vajrayana. Very much so—absolutely a lot.

I would like you to understand that as your problem and my problem at the same time. My problem is that I have difficulty presenting teachings without saying too much, that is, before anybody has any kind of understanding. And your problem is being told too much before you can understand it. I think, for example, that your understanding of the hinayana and its transition to mahayana has worked beautifully. It has worked very beautifully. You understood hinayana and you understood mahayana. Very good. We have to work harder on the transition from the mahayana to the vajrayana, very wholeheartedly, since we're going to share that transition together. Personally, I would be very delighted to tell you the secrets of vajrayana—whatever they are. [*Laughter*] They are known as open secrets, anyway. However, it would be good if you could work harder on the mahayana, the essence of mahayana, of course—which is taming one's ego. That does apply to oneself. And also I would like to see something happening, not only theoretically, but

individually—something happening in that we are all becoming tamed people, genuine people. You can't teach vajrayana to somebody who is not genuine, somebody who is a fake.

If you have any questions, you are welcome.

Question: I feel as though there is actually a lot of sincerity in people wanting to do these things, to be cheerful about everything, drive all blames into one, be grateful to everybody, et cetera. But there is still confusion about how clumsy you can afford to get with that whole process, how self-conscious you can get. In other words, if you could do it with complete conviction, then automatically it would become real. But a lot of times you get stuck halfway through and—

Rinpoche: It's okay. You must know that already. You're asking such an idiotic question. [*Laughter*]

Q: That's right.

R: Well, do you remember? We did it together in our office. We pretended at the beginning—we did it afterward. So the same kind of approach goes with everything. And in the end we had a great celebration; and, in fact, we didn't have to talk to each other. You just understood what I meant. That could happen.

Q: Yes. thank you.

R: You're welcome.

Q: I didn't understand exactly what you meant about the kernel of insanity being buddha nature?

R: Is there a problem?

Q: I don't understand it.

R: Well, the kernel of insanity is a kernel of insanity and realization. And she is afraid of that, afraid that something else might be inside it, which is buddha nature. Actually, there is something more than just a kernel of insanity there. Something more than that is happening. You felt that kernel of insanity, but you have no idea whether it is true or not. And there is actually something more provocative than that taking place. And the particular friend of mine is afraid that that kernel of insanity may turn out actually to be a kernel of sanity. She is afraid of it a lot.

Q: Is that egolessness?

R: Yes. She's ripe for it. It's as if you are having cramps, about to give birth to a baby.

Q: They say in the books that there is some point in the yogi's progress when there is the possibility of insanity. Is that the same thing?

R: I think so. What do you mean by that? I don't know exactly, but just let it go. This one sounds like a vajrayana question. So let it go, part of your collection from India.

Q: In the list of the forty-six unskillful actions of the bodhisattva, there is one that goes something like "Not fearlessly destroying heretics." Personally, I have difficulty with that. And also, I see a lot of fearlessly stepping out toward other scenes, which seems to be inspired by that idea of wanting to destroy heresy. But it is very hard to see how that relates to gentleness and driving all blames into one.

R: It doesn't make any difference. Gentleness is aggression at that point. You're supposed to save people by the neck, pull them back. It actually means that. Simply saying, "What you are doing is terrible; you're going down in the samsaric whirlpool," [may not be enough]. The point is to save them in whatever way that one can. It's very simple.

Q: It seems that you would have to be awfully clear to be able to do that.

R: Well, you have your good state of mind to begin with. Then you act with the bodhisattva's mentality of benevolence. You are trying to save somebody's life. It's very simple.

Q: Rinpoche, it seems that at some point you are inspired a lot by sentient beings and there is a sense that, in working with them, you are discovering a lot about yourself. But there is an awful amount of pain out there.

R: Out where? Sentient beings?

Q: Yes.

R: How about yourself?

Q: Well, yeah, too. But—

R: Yes. So what's the problem?

Q: In the sense of being joyful all the time, I mean . . .

R: Well, the joyfulness is because you get into the dharma to deal with those situations. "Thank God [*laughter*] we have lights, we have bright lights.

Q: Yeah. But . . .

R: One doesn't have to be all that philosophical particularly. It's just a common situation: it is good that we have light; it is good that I have energy to work on. It's very simple. Absolutely simple.

Q: I understand, but it seems like you can almost get tripped out on it.

R: I don't think so. If you philosophize, you could get tripped out. But if you do it, you'll find there is no problem. As I told you, I myself feel good about the whole thing. And I didn't trip out at all. Thank God. [*Laughter*]

Q: Rinpoche, the way you spoke of your experience as being so sad and depressed and lonely, it sounded as if you experienced as deep a wretchedness as we do. [*Laughter*] Didn't being born a tulku and being trained and disciplined from such an early age help you to avoid all that wretchedness? Isn't that so?

R: Well, I've been saved—I've been saved from having to go through a kind of therapist training. And I found out that I didn't need to go through that. [*Laughter. Student is a therapist.*]

Q: That's nasty. [*Laughter.*]

R: Yes. That's good. I'm sorry, but it's good. That's it, my dear fellow. Anybody else, here?

Q: This kernel of insanity sounds somehow like a cancer, or like something that could kill you.

R: It does. It does.

Q: It could kill you?

R: Yes. It does kill you. It's called samsara. But the discovery of something beyond the kernel of insanity is the cure of cancer, which is called enlightenment.

Q: What about all the waves of fear that you go through?

R: It doesn't matter. They are just coincidental.

Q: What about all the weeping?

R: Weeping?

Q: Such as the weeping you went through.

R: Oh. I felt great about that.

Q: You loved that?

R: I didn't regard it as cancer, particularly. I just thought of my yearning toward [my guru]. And my discovery was so great that therefore I wept. I didn't weep because I was deprived; I was weeping just at my discovery of a new good thing. That's all.

Q: Mm-hmm. What about deprivation? You described shunyata in terms of the contrast between loss and gain.

R: What do you mean by that?

Q: Well, I have to look at my notes, but it's like when you have your wallet and then it is stolen. You gave a number of examples and in each

one you had something and then you were deprived of it. So there was some feeling of something being taken away from you.

R: That feels okay.

Q: It feels okay?

R: I think so.

Q: Does wretchedness feel okay?

R: It's part of the celebration.

Q: Yes. So poverty is part of the celebration?

R: Poverty is part of the richness.

Q: Okay.

R: One difference is that I was not born a Jew, but born a Tibetan.

Q: Well, can you prescribe something for the Jews? [*Laughter*]

R: No.

Q: Okay.

R: No. I was born as a king. I'm afraid it's difficult to explain that. Americans have difficulty understanding even a bodhisattva king, let alone a vajrayana king—which is completely unacceptable. I suppose. [*Gasps as in shock. Laughter.*] "Nothing to worry. Everything is going to be okay." [*Laughter*]

Okay. Maybe we should stop at this point. Okay? [*Would-be questioner puts up hand. Questioner is a poet.*] There is no poetic license here. When we stop, we stop.

The Lion's Roar

HAVING PROBLEMS come up is a way of destroying our credentials as well as our comfort and security. Then we can begin relating with the emotions and accepting our life situation, accepting all the chaos that happens. So the chaos, and relating to the chaos, should be regarded as "good news, extremely good news, utterly good news." Enlightened experience is not exclusively for pacifists. Enlightened experience also means relating with energy, how to handle this eruption of tremendous energy, waves and waves of energy.

In the third turning of the wheel of dharma, the Buddha speaks of the Lion's Roar. The Lion's Roar is the fearless proclamation that anything that happens in our state of mind, including emotions, is manure. Whatever comes up is a workable situation; it is a reminder of practice, and it acts as a speedometer. It is a way to proceed further into the practice of meditation.

In this way we begin to realize that all kinds of chaotic situations that might occur in life are opportune situations. They are workable situations that we mustn't reject and mustn't regard as purely a regression or going back to confusion at all. Instead, we must develop some kind of respect for those situations that happen in our state of mind.

There are several stages in relating with energy and emotions. There is seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and transmuting.

Seeing refers to a general awareness that emotion has its own space, its own development, so that at least you accept it as part of the pattern—without question, without reference back to the scriptures or whatever. Without the help of credentials, we experience directly that those things are happening.

Then hearing is the experience of the pulsation of such energy, of the energy upsurge coming toward you.

Smelling is the experience that energy is somewhat workable—the way you smell food, and that smell becomes the appetizer before you eat. It smells like a good meal, smells delicious, although you haven't yet eaten it. And somehow that makes the whole thing more workable.

Then touching is feeling the nitty-gritty of the emotional energy. You can touch it, relate with it, and realize that, after all, emotions are not particularly either destructive or creative. Rather, they are just a self-existing situation, just upsurges of energy—whatever particular forms they might take: aggression or passion or depression.

Finally there is transmutation. This does not mean rejecting the basic qualities of emotions, but it is like the alchemical practice of changing lead into gold. Basically, in that practice you don't reject the metallic qualities, but you change the appearance and substance somewhat. Similarly, you can experience emotional upheaval as it is but still work with it, become one with it.

The usual problem we have when emotions arise is that we feel we are being challenged by them. We think that emotions will take over our self-existence, our credential of existence. We are afraid that, if we become the embodiment of hatred or passion, then we won't have any personal credentials anymore.

So usually we react against emotion, because we feel we might be taken over by it. We feel there is a strong possibility that we might freak out, lose our heads. We are afraid that aggression or depression will become so overwhelming that we will begin to lose our general functional level, forget how to brush our teeth, how to take a shit in the toilet, or whatever. There's some kind of fear that the whole thing might become too much, so that we might get hooked into it. Then we will lose our dignity, our ability to function as ordinary human beings like the others. That seems to be the problem.

So transmutation in this case means going through such fear or whatever else might be or occur. Let yourself be nuts. Go through it, give in to it, experience it. And when you begin to experience this process of going toward emotions rather than emotions coming toward you, then you begin to make a journey. You are making an effort toward them, therefore some actual relationship is involved, and a sense of dance begins to evolve.

This means that the highest forces of energy, any kind of extraordinary energies there might be, become absolutely workable rather than taking you over. This is because, if you are not offering any resistance, there's nothing to take over. Whenever there's no resistance, there is a sense of rhythm happening. The music and dance happen at the same time.

So that is what is called the lion's roar: whatever occurs in the realm of samsaric mind is regarded as the path, and everything is workable. It is a fearless proclamation—lion's roar.

But as long as we patch over what we feel are unworkable situations, as long as we try to put the patchwork of metaphysical, philosophical, or neat religious ideas over the holes, then it ceases to be a lion's roar. It turns instead into a coward's scream—which is very pathetic.

That is usually what happens. Whenever we feel that we can't work on something, automatically we jump; we look back and try to find some kind of resources for ourselves. And we use all kinds of euphemisms: we ask, "What's the medicine for this?"—which is a euphemism for patchwork. We are trying to conceal the hole. "How could we save face and avoid being embarrassed and challenged by our emotions? How could we get out of this?" Maybe we can avoid the whole thing by putting patchwork on top of patchwork. We can load ourselves with millions of patchworks all on top of each other. If the first one is too delicate, the second may be more powerful.

So we end up creating a suit of armor—but even that has some discrepancies. The joints in our suit of armor begin to squeak; there are some holes in there. And it is difficult to relate with that. We don't quite want to put patches on the joints. Although we don't want to squeak, we want to be able to move, we still want to dance—we still want to have joints.

So unless we are completely mummified, which is death, being a corpse, there's no way to have perfect patchwork. For a living human being, patchwork is an absolutely impractical idea. From this point of view, buddhadharma without credentials is equal to the lion's roar. It proclaims that we do not need patches anymore. We could transmute the substance, the feeling in its own existence, which is extremely powerful.

In the Indian Ashokan artwork, the proclamation of lion's roar was depicted by a sculpture of four lions looking in the four directions, which

symbolizes that you don't have a back. Every direction is a front; there is all-pervading awareness. And this symbol was adopted by modern Indians as their state emblem. So fearlessness comes from facing all directions. We don't have to take one direction; once we begin to radiate our fearlessness, it is all-pervading, radiating in all directions. In iconographical tradition, certain buddhas are represented as having a thousand faces, or a million faces, looking in all directions. That symbolizes panoramic awareness—looking everywhere, so there is nothing to defend.

The lion's roar is analogous to space: space is constantly self-existing center as well as fringe. Wherever there's space, there's center as well as fringe. So space is all-pervading and self-contained. Similarly, the idea of lion's roar is fearlessness in the sense that every situation that comes up in our life is workable. Nothing is rejected as a bad influence or grasped as a good influence. Everything that goes on in our life situation, all the types of emotion, is workable. The inherent essence of situations is workable, and the apparent qualities of situations are workable as well.

From that point of view, we can see quite clearly that trying to apply a reference point of credentials is useless. We have to really work with the situation completely and thoroughly. It is like being extremely interested in food, in eating food. There's no time to read the menu because we simply want to eat. We really want to relate with the food, so we forget about the menu. It's our immediate interest. It's a direct relationship of some kind.

That seems to be the basic point of the lion's roar. In other words, if we are able to deal directly with the emotions arising in our life situation and relate with them as a workable situation, then the whole thing becomes a situation that doesn't need any further maintenance. It is a self-maintained situation, and any help from outsiders becomes credentials.

So we develop our self-existing help within that. At that point, as I mentioned already, we don't have to really avoid the credential problem anymore, because there's no room for speculating or validating. Everything becomes obvious and immediate and workable. There's not even the chance or time or space to speculate on how to become a charlatan or how to con other people, because the situation is so immediate. The idea of charlatanism doesn't appear at all, because there's no room for the idea of gain.

Question: Is this true of any emotion, that you just deal with it by getting directly into it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you really get into it, which doesn't mean to say that you have to kill somebody or suppress it, but just get the texture of its own nature, yes.

Q: That sounds too simple.

TR: It is simple, that's why it's workable. This doesn't need special training, just use basic instinct.

Q: It seems that in certain emotional states, part of the state itself is a kind of paralysis; you are unable to respond, you're actually stuck in that place. Do you mean that at that point there must be an extra effort of conscious attention to that?

TR: Well, when you get stuck, it is a beautiful situation. You have more chance to relate with the textures. Let it be that way, rather than trying to get unstuck.

Q: What about depression? All the things you are talking about seem to be energies, emotions of energies, but a state of depression seems to be a negative energy, or absence of energy.

TR: Depression is one of the very powerful energies, one of the most common energies that we have. It is energy. Depression is like an oxygen tank that wants to burst but is still bottled. It is a fantastic bank of energies, much more so than aggression and passion which are kind of developed and then let out. They are in some sense frivolous, whereas depression is the most dignified energy of all.

Q: I'm not quite satisfied. You say it's a bank of energy. How do you take the money out of the bank, or does it just stay in the vault?

TR: Well, try to relate to the texture of the energy in the depression situation. Depression is not just a blank, it has all kinds of intelligent things happening within it. I mean, basically depression is extraordinarily interesting and a highly intelligent state of being. That is why you are depressed. Depression is an unsatisfied state of mind in which you feel that you have no outlet. So work with the dissatisfaction of that depression. Whatever is in it is extraordinarily powerful. It has all kinds of answers in it, but the answers are hidden. So, in fact, I think depression is one of the most powerful of all energies. It is extraordinarily awake energy, although you might feel sleepy.

Q: Is that because it wipes everything away? Could it be a kind of emptiness, a sort of doorway to meditation. I mean, in that kind of depression there is the feeling that nothing is happening at all.

TR: Well, that's it. That's quite a profound thing. It has its own tex-

tures. Let's say that you feel extraordinarily depressed, and there is no point in doing anything. You seem to be doing the same thing all over again. You want to give up the whole thing but you can't. And on the whole, you are extremely depressed and trying to do something is repetitious. And trying not to do something is also irritating. Why should you do something? The whole thing is absolutely meaningless. You feel extremely down. Trying to get into the things that used to inspire you makes more depression, because you used to get off on them and you can't anymore. That's very depressing and everything is really ordinary, extremely ordinary and really real, and you don't really want to do anything with it. It's an extraordinarily heavy weight pushing down. You begin to experience that your ceilings are much heavier than they used to be, and the floor becomes much heavier than it used to be. There is a whole wall made out of lead, compressing you all over the place; there is no outlet at all. Even the air you breathe is metallic or lead or very thick. There is no freshness at all. Everything that depression brings is really, really real and very heavy. And you can't really get out of it because the idea of getting out of it itself brings further depression, so you are constantly bottled and pushed in that situation, and you would like to just purely sit around.

Well, if the whole thing gets worse, then just trying to step out, which seems to be the only answer, is a suicidal approach. Things get very heavy and very slow. Meeting inspiring friends, who used to be inspiring friends, becomes depressing. When you try to put on a record of the music that used to inspire you, it also brings depression. Still nothing ever moves. The whole thing is black, absolute black.

But, at the same time, you are experiencing tremendous texture, the texture of how the stagnation of samsara works, which is fantastic. You feel the texture of something. That entertainment didn't work. This entertainment didn't work. Referring back to the past didn't work; projecting into the future didn't work. Everything is made out of texture, so you could experience depression in a very intelligent way. You could relate with it completely, fully. And once you begin to relate with it as texture of some kind, as a real and solid situation which contains tremendous texture, tremendous smell, then depression becomes a beautiful walkway. We can't discuss it really. We have to actually get into heavy depression and then feel about that.

Q: Unite with the depression.

TR: Yeah, you become the depression.

Q: What about extreme physical panic or discomfort, the nausea, the headache, thinking you're going to pass right out, and sometimes the sweat, the cold sweat, the shortness of breath where you can't catch your breath.

TR: It seems to be psychosomatic. According to the Buddhist way of viewing physical health, any sickness that comes up is 100 percent, if not 200, psychosomatic. Always.

Q: So you just keep going back to that point?

TR: Yeah, back to mind, back to the heart. There is a Zen writing called "On Trust in the Heart."* You should read that.

Q: So what you're saying is that everything that I experience and everything that I think as "I experience" is really buddha mind experiencing itself?

TR: Yeah, without fear. That's the lion's roar. That is lion's roar.

Q: When you are doing sitting meditation, do you bring the emotions that arise in everyday life to your sitting, or is it simply enough to go back to your breath?

TR: Well, as far as the sitting practice is concerned, emotions are thinking, pure thinking. In our everyday life situations, emotions are a challenge, possibilities of path.

Q: So it would seem that the only time an emotion could harm you is if you try to repress it, if you try to push it back.

TR: As well as if you try to analyze it fully or act it out in a frivolous way.

Q: What do you mean by frivolous?

TR: Well, go out and kill somebody. You know that.

Q: It seems like emotions take on a quality of coming toward you, so you have to figure them out, analyze them.

TR: I don't see problems with that. It's a question of whenever there is doubt, you find out the root of the doubt and find out where the doubt came from, not particularly in order to solve the problem as such, but just to relate with the face value of things happening on the spot. That's what is called, in Buddhist terms, scientific mind. It is experiencing, analyzing on the spot without value judgment. So from that you begin to learn with tremendous directness, the simple facts of the matter, and you

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*Attributed to Seng-ts'an.—Editor

go on from that. You don't have to be goal-oriented particularly. And scientific mind is not particularly goal-oriented. True scientists are unconcerned with the goal. They are fascinated by finding out the facts of the matter.

Q: I don't quite know what you mean by experiencing emotions in meditation as thoughts. A powerful physical sensation might go along with an emotion. I don't know what you mean by experiencing it as a thought.

TR: An emotion is also a thought. You're enraged with anger, as if you are almost going to levitate on your meditation cushion. And it's still your thought, so you say, "a thought," "thought"; you say, "thinking," "thinking," "thinking."

Q: Are you saying that there is actually no feeling without thinking?

TR: Well, you see, the thing is, the fifth skandha of consciousness, of thinking, plays the leading part, the introductory one. This goes back to the conceptual, the feeling, and everything. So the fifth skandha plays an important part, always. The fifth skandha is always the leading point.

Q: I know the point is not to get rid of your depression or anger, but do they wear out, like distractions?

TR: No promise, my dear. Wait and see. Have more patience.

Aggression

Grant your blessings so that my mind may be one with the dharma,
Grant your blessings so that dharma may progress along the path,
Grant your blessings so that the path may clarify confusion,
Grant your blessings so that confusion may dawn as wisdom.

IN BINDING OUR MIND to the dharma, we are able to realize the confusions that take place in our life and the amount of suffering created from our life situation. But we are still unable to accept the truth completely. So we have to become completely identified with the dharma, which is much more than believing in something, much more than taking a random step toward commitment. There's a tremendous difference between commitment to the dharma and actually becoming part of the dharma: taking a step toward it has something to do with making decisions, but becoming completely committed is more than a decision—it is leaping off a cliff. The whole thing depends on a sense of trust. Some sympathy and trust and a sense of warmth need to be generated—to oneself to begin with and to others as one develops sympathy to oneself. It needs to be beyond the aggression level.

One of the obstacles to one's mind being able to go along with or become part of the dharma is your sense of separation from it, obviously. That sense of separation comes from immense aggression, holding back, and the sense of fight or struggle. You're ready to wage war with your world. Although you might regard your enemy as a real experience—

dealing with an enemy and having a fight—the enemy is not you. So you constantly have a sense of separation between yourself and other.

There are several ways of becoming emotionally involved with the dharma. You may be inspired by a fascination with the teachings or by the fascination of friends who are involved in the teachings, or by a certain truth that it speaks. But inspiration does not seem to be enough. If grass is green, green is grass at the same time. You have to be soaked completely in the dharma, so that there's no separation between the greenness of the grass and the grass itself. You have to be completely soaked in it, which requires a lot of sympathy and a loving attitude. Whenever there's any resentment, the faintest resentment to some aspect of one's life—that you're an employee, the nature of your work, the atmosphere at large, the change of season, too many flies—you say, "This is not really resentment, this is just irritation." Sure it's irritation, but that is a form of resentment. We have created a gigantic cast-iron fortification. And even though we have particular irritations such as flies, mosquitoes, or whatever, we also express a constant sense of resentment in the form of immense aggression. Generally what has happened, particularly in the West, is that we have developed or grown up in a world that is a gigantic marketplace. You can bargain your way out and you can bargain your way in. If somebody's cheating you, you can bargain with him or you can go to the next store and buy the same thing cheaper. Everything that we do in our life is businesslike because we are trained that way. We feel that if we pay for something we should get our money's worth. We operate with an immense business mentality all the time.

At the same time, we also have a sense of warfare—who's going to win the war? That sense of warfare becomes a natural, ongoing process. Needless to say, a lot of the conflict that takes place in this world is not based on just a simple disagreement or misunderstanding—our aggression actually created the problem. This kind of aggression becomes intense and it takes all kinds of forms—sometimes very controlled or sedate, sometimes very active and articulated. Sometimes we even become victims of our own aggression. When we try to bounce on somebody else, it bounces back on us as well. We begin to hurt ourselves, to make life miserable. The opposite of that is not so much a completely peaceful person. That isn't particularly the idea. The idea is to under-

stand that particular type of aggression and to work along with it in terms of our practice. It is an inspiration to relate with the dharma.

The first dharma of Gampopa is knowing oneself. That seems to be the meaning of one's mind going along with the dharma. One's mind begins to follow that particular pattern. You're willing to experience yourself, to acknowledge how much time you waste through this particular style of aggression. You might say that acknowledging that is not quite enough. But we have more to talk about tomorrow—if you don't leave. But first things first, as they say. And that first thing is to see what's wrong with us. Then we can look further—what type of wrongness do we have?

Then—what can we do about it? How can we cure it? That's the general approach.

The steps we are following in this case are the four dharmas of Gampopa. The first one is following one's mind according to the dharma. It is actually acknowledging ourselves, understanding the nature of samsara and the nature of our pain and our aggression—which is very real and very personal. We've been living with ourselves all our life (and will be for the rest of our life). So we know ourselves better than anybody else. There's no point in pretending that nothing happened, everything's beautiful. We know that's not quite true. If you think that your whole life—your past, future, and present—is great, I think you're under some kind of hypnosis or trip of ego. You're kidding yourself, fooling yourself. That's a very serious matter. It is worth thinking about. So in the first dharma of Gampopa we are reexamining ourselves. We are not trying to find a way to cure ourselves, necessarily. But we are trying to find out where we are—the way and style in which we are imprisoned, the reason we ended up in this particular jail, how our situation came about. And once we begin to know that, we begin to know lots of truths, lots of dharmas.

But if we look at things from an arrogant as well as an aggressive approach, we may not be able to understand anything at all. We might say, "Everything's okay, there's nothing to worry about. We don't need to listen to this particular bullshit." But that is the voice of our aggression. Aggression could be highly articulate and very intellectual or extremely impulsive and emotional. It takes all kinds of forms. It's not just one thing—purely an emotion. And it's not as if you are telling somebody, "Just calm down and take a rest. Everything's going to be okay."

It's not as simple as that. It is very subtle. It's very hard to discover ourselves. In fact, the particular type of aggression we are talking about is very difficult to discover until we have completely overcome the basic nature of ego. But at least we can make early discoveries of the crude aspect of it.

As far as this present situation of the world of ambition is concerned, aggression seems to be a success. Aggression made the world and we also have products of aggression: efficiency, richness, great learning. Everything has become the product of aggression—not only the product but also the seed. We are constantly involved in an ongoing chain reaction of aggression and its results, which created seeds of more aggression. You can't buy an automobile if you never check where you buy the spare parts you might need later on. And if you're buying a foreign car, it's more difficult because they might have to ship them from overseas. We would like to make sure we know where we can get spare parts. It's exactly the same with aggression. We would like to have spare parts available if we break down. We have all kinds of reserve supplies—new tactics, new techniques—stored in our minds all the time. We say, "I don't have to use this at this point, but I might need it later on. Before I use my capital, maybe I should experiment with small thinking to get my position without spending capital. If worse comes to worse, I will strike."

Whether you are a kind-mannered, mild-mannered, or aggressively mannered person, it is exactly the same. All the time there is this big barrier, which creates obstacles to understanding. There's a big barrier, a big fence, between dharma and us, which prevents us from actually clicking or communicating. That seems to be the basic point: in order to become a follower of the dharma, one has to become nonaggressive, beyond aggression. In order to do that, there has to be some kind of warmth in oneself, gentleness to oneself, which is known as maitri, and there has to be greater gentleness to others, which is known as karuna or compassion. When we begin to make a connection to dharma, we are willing to open our gates, to tear down our walls. Then for the first time we begin to realize that the joke has been on us all the time. Accumulating ammunition and building fence after fence was our trip rather than something actually having taken place. We have wasted so much of our energy and economy on that trip. When we begin to realize the

joke was on us and created by us, then we are actually following our mind according to the dharma.

Naturally, that discovery goes along with a sense of humor. It's not another resentment at all. That would be the opposite direction—that you want to kill the person playing jokes on you (which is yourself) and keep going all the time.

Question: You spoke against aggression, but don't you think that sometimes the energy of aggression can produce a more harmonious situation?

Rinpoche: Well, I think it's a question of what kind of aggression we are talking about. Aggression with stupidity and confusion is self-destructive. It's like aged wine turning to vinegar as opposed to aged wine.

Q: Will you speak a little about aggression and change, bringing about change in our lives in a nonaggressive way?

R: Well, you see, what we are discussing is not particularly how we could combat aggression. That would be impractical. What we are talking about is simply how we can realize its style of operating in the world. Then I don't see any particular problems. You are actually approaching aggression from the back door, so to speak, and various aggressive activities could become part of the learning process at the same time. This particular discussion today is not really complete without going through the next three dharmas of Gampopa. Once we put all the pieces together, it will make it much clearer.

Q: It seems that one of the obstacles to feeling aggression is feeling that aggression isn't right.

R: That aggression isn't right?

Q: Well, I guess that's an aspect of aggression as well, feeling that it isn't right or acceptable in certain situations.

R: Yeah. So, can you say something more?

Q: Uh, it's difficult to get personal.

R: Aggression is always personal.

Q: Uh, in many instances, in my relating with you, there's difficulty because I feel anger. And the anger seems to be not wanting to be exposed in many instances—and who are you to expose me? It seems to take that form, anyway. There seems to be a great difficulty there because of your place and my place, the guru-student relationship.

R: Well, that's not a particularly unusual case. [*Laughter*]

Q: It may not be unusual, but it still presents problems.

R: Sure, if you call it a problem.

Q: At this point, it's not a problem; at this point, it seems to be humorous.

R: It's not a problem. Something's actually beginning to work. When you feel touchy, when the relationship is so much on edge—something's about to spark. There's obviously resentment. There's obviously some kind of arrogance on your part that you have a right to have your ego and confuse the world. You don't want anybody to mind your business, particularly. I'm sorry to put it so crudely, but that's usually the case. I think that's the beginning of working with the student-teacher relationship, when something like that begins to happen. It's a very hot point obviously.

Q: Egads.

R: It's just about to spark something. And that seems to be a very interesting point—you could go further with that, you could explore more. The relationship is like a mirror reflection—you could get angry with the mirror because it makes you look so fat.

Q: I've never thought in terms of getting angry at the teacher though.

R: Well, that's exactly what happens, you know. That's the kind of thing we're talking about. There's somebody who minds your business and reflects back on you. That's a highlight of one's life, I would say—there's something cooking.

Q: I'm in complete agreement with that. [*Laughter*]

Q: Could it be that in other relationships in which you feel resentment to a person whom you certainly don't consider to be your teacher, that could also be a mirror in some sense?

R: Sure, definitely, but the relationship may be less intense.

Q: I often feel that I have confidence in a teacher as being a clear mirror, but some people are very, very muddy.

R: But it's still a mirror. Whether it's a good one or a bad one, it's still a mirror. That's the difference between a teacher and other people. One is clear; the other is slightly clouded. But it is still a mirror, there is still some truth in it.

Q: I feel that the direction in which one thinks determines the way one is. That is, if one thinks negatively, it seems to be that one becomes negative, and the same with positivity. And after working for many years in a teaching which followed the line that you are presenting, it got to

the point where I was completely negative, a kind of negativity that I'd never had in my life. I got to the point of feeling that working toward seeing the negative facets of myself resulted in my being more negative than ever. I began to look for a teaching that stressed love and light and positivity. And at this point I'm just confused. Could you comment on that, please?

R: Yes, indeed. [*Laughter*] Well, how should I begin? You see, the whole approach is not so much that since you have had one extreme experience already, therefore you should seek the other extreme. That will create a heart attack. You become a flea, jumping back and forth. One of the problems is that you want to solve your problem. You want to solve it very badly and you try to find the best remedy, which creates more problems. But as a matter of fact, the problem isn't there at all, even at the beginning. You have created the problem yourself. You are so panicked by the problem that you begin to be unable to look at it. You see in the dust a snake-shaped rope and suddenly panic, saying, "Oh, there's a snake, let's get away! Tell everybody there's a snake over there." But you never explored whether there was a rope or a snake at the beginning. This is a very old Buddhist analogy. When we panic, we see things in an exaggerated form, usually for the worse; and out of panic, if we look for somebody love-and-lighty, we might find one. That person could be extremely aggressive at heart but still, seemingly at least, it's a chance to talk to someone who appears to be good, kindly. I think a lot of people got sucked into that kind of situation by jumping to their first conclusion and being unable to relate to their own panic. Panic is a very interesting experience. It makes you completely petrified. You actually can't even think. There is a kind of shunyata nonthinking experience occurring in panic. But that's very hard to detect if you want to recapture it. [*Laughter*] Don't leave tomorrow. [*Laughter*]

Q: The four dharmas of Gampopa is a series, a path that every person has to walk on by oneself and can only do by oneself. But the formulation by which we know it starts with a supplication. What is the relationship between those two and to whom is it addressed?

R: The idea of blessing is a very interesting point. When we talk about a blessing, it's not so much goodness descending on you; it's a form of inspiration in which you inspire yourself. At the same time as that inspiration takes place, the blessing is also present. You create your own situation. Most of the supplications that exist in the Buddhist tradi-

tion are based on an awakening process rather than confirmation. It is awakening—how to awake, how to transcend. We are not addressing anybody in particular, but we are addressing the lineage (the Practicing Lineage, the Kagyü lineage). The reason we are doing that is because the lineage represents practice and discipline and we follow certain formats with that lineage. We are practitioners of that lineage, which means that we have to go along with that discipline in the same way as others have done in the past—Gampopa, Milarepa, and so forth. So, we're inspiring ourselves, saying, "I'm going to be one too." It is a personal commitment. It is the same as reading the *Heart Sutra* and other Buddhist sutras, which are purely dialogues between Buddha and his disciples. At the same time, it has its quality of up-to-dateness.

Q: Rinpoche, you said we should try to understand the nature of aggression and pain, not in the sense of trying to cure ourselves, but to understand what's imprisoning us and that to relate to that in an arrogant or aggressive way might somehow disallow understanding. And, at least at this point, I don't see how I can relate to anything other than aggressively or arrogantly, no matter what style I might adopt. And I also have a little problem seeing the difference between curing oneself, meaning getting rid of sickness, and seeing what's imprisoning us.

R: Well, I think basically the point is a sense of understanding the aggression, to begin with. It's like the analogy of drowning. You have to use the water to come up to the surface. It's the same water, and whether you drown or not is up to you. You are drowning because you have mismanaged the water and therefore you have to use a different approach. At the beginning, your approach may be an aggressive one, but you are willing to shed your arrogance and you are willing to be ripped off, so to speak, willing to become naked. Once there is willingness to be exposed without any hesitation, then there is no problem, no difficulty.

Q: So that willingness doesn't rid you of aggression, but somehow changes the character of it.

R: Well, it might be the same style, you might be doing the same thing, but your aggression sort of uses itself up. The later pursuit through the path is very irritating, but it doesn't rely on any aggressive means or any aggressive approach. It's a question of just acknowledging boredom. Boredom seems to be a way of transmuting aggression into practice.

Q: I was just thinking about the analogy of a mirror, that everybody could be a mirror or that situations could be a mirror. But upon looking at the mirror, would it be true that before you could see yourself, you would see your aggression? In other words, if I saw somebody—could they really reveal myself to me if I would allow myself to look at that mirror?

R: I think so, yeah.

Q: But before I could see myself, would I see my resistance to that?

R: Yeah, that's possible. According to the psychological steps that take place, you don't actually see aggression first. Aggression is the flash, and one's ego is the light which is permeating the flash. But you don't have time to go through that process. It's so fast that you have been preprogrammed already. So, seemingly, the only things you see or care for are your reactions.

Q: Then before I could recapture that flash or see the flash again, I would have to work through all that aggression.

R: Slow motion of some kind. But that seems to be a bit tedious and analyzing it doesn't actually help very much.

Q: Well, what would be the . . .

R: At this point, nothing except understanding what's going on rather than analyzing.

Q: Mm-hmm.

R: At the beginning one has to develop a sense of intense imprisonment. That seems to be the first inspiration. Then, once you begin to feel the sense of intense imprisonment, you begin to feel more of a sense of the possibilities of not being there.

Is Meditation Therapy?

WELCOME, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. Tonight we are going to discuss the relationship between therapy and meditation. Is meditation therapy?

As we advance on the physical-technological level, spiritual advancement also should take place at the same time. But that has become purely an idea—what has actually happened is that we have become technologically highly advanced, but at the same time we have a problem with spiritual advancement. That seems to be the problem that has developed. The notion of meditation and the notion of therapy and the notion of sanity become big issues at this point.

Can the practice of meditation play as important a part in our society as therapy or as technological advancement? The question here is not so much the value of practicing meditation versus the value of technology and therapy, as such. Maybe the title of this talk is deceptive. As soon as you use a question mark and some phrase like "Is meditation therapy?" that automatically involves evaluating which of those is better, as if they were going to compete with each other. So the question we are discussing is not which is more worthwhile, which is more expansive or gives the most direct result, but we are talking about the general situation in our society, the national psychology.

Due to enormous scientific advancement in this country and in the West in general, we have involved ourselves in looking for further advancement and looking for a sort of mechanical spiritual process which has caused spiritual materialism. Maybe we have learned certain yogic tricks and have managed to slow down our heartbeat or stand on our heads without using our hands for forty-five hours a day. [*Laughter*]

Maybe we have learned to barely levitate by holding our breath—like a helicopter. [*Laughter*] When tricks like that are involved, then we are still concerned with collecting gadgets rather than experiencing reality, I'm afraid. So, in terms of gadgets, meditation practice is not regarded as another gadget, but it is regarded as a practice—a real practice.

We need to discuss the meaning of the word *practice*—what do we mean by practice? What does practice mean? Practice or discipline is a particular involvement or interest that allows us to let go. I do not mean letting go in the sense of becoming solemn, but letting go in the sense that there is something that we can work with. That working situation is largely based on the notion of cutting through all kinds of expectations and preconceptions about what things might be or which things might answer our question. So letting go is largely based on cutting through preconceptions. When we talk about cutting through preconception, it sounds good, it sounds quite nice. The idea that we would like to cut through our preconceptions sounds *great*. But at the same time, cutting through preconceptions involves cutting through our expectations and our pains and pleasures. Cutting through preconceptions quite possibly could bring us to an enormous state of boredom rather than entertainment. The whole thing doesn't sound very attractive or entertaining or particularly encouraging.

The practice of meditation is largely based on some kind of sacrifice, some kind of openness. Such sacrifice is necessary and has to be personally experienced. Ordinarily we might sacrifice something on behalf of or for the sake of developing goodness, or because we are willing to suffer on behalf of humanity. But those sacrifices are—pardon the expression—bullshit. [*Laughter*] The sacrifice which has been recommended, prescribed in the Buddhist tradition, is to sacrifice something without any purpose. Now that's outrageous, that's terrible. Does that mean you are going to be a slave? No, not unless you're going to turn yourself into a slave. Sacrificing something without any purpose is outrageous and precisely heroic and fantastic; it is outrageous and very beautiful.

Such a sacrifice without purpose can take place by not regarding any form of therapy as a way of saving yourself from pain, feeling that you will be finally saved or that you have managed to get away with using some method to save yourself from seeing reality. The practice of meditation is sacrifice without techniques, without means, without gloves or

pliers or hammers. You have to use your bare hands, bare feet, bare head, to relate with the whole thing.

The notion of reality and reward can become a problem. Basically, fundamentally, there is no reality and there is no reward, and we are not trying to get anything out of this life at all. That is why the notion of freedom is important. Freedom—unexpected, undemanded freedom. Freedom cannot be bought or bartered for. Freedom doesn't come cheap or expensive. It just happens. It is only without any reference point that freedom can evolve. That is why it is known as freedom—because it is unconditional.

From that point of view, we could say that meditation is not therapy. If there is any notion of therapy involved in the spiritual journey, or in any kind of spiritual discipline, then it becomes conditional. You might ask then how we could use our talent, our patience, our discipline, and everything as part of our journey. Well, that particular journey, those particular talents, that evolutionary organic process, also have to be an expression of unconditional freedom. If there is no freedom, complete freedom, then there's no answer to that question, there's no hope at all.

So, it is our duty—in fact, we might even go as far as to say it is the purpose of our life—it is our heroic duty to encourage the notion of freedom as it is, without contamination by any further pollution of this and that and that and this. No bargaining. Truth and honesty are discussed in the, so to speak, military schools or the highly conservative, disciplined training grounds. If there were no concern for truth and honesty, then there could be flexibility in relating with freedom. Suppose we found our death. Then what would happen? Would we be saved? No. We would still keep our allegiance to unconditional freedom. We have to maintain ourselves in an erect posture in order to work with freedom. The practice of meditation in the Buddhist tradition is extremely simple, extremely erect, and direct. There is a sense of pride in the fact that basically you are going to sit and practice meditation. When you sit and practice meditation, you don't do anything at all. You just sit and work with your breathing, your walking; you just sit and let all these thoughts come alive. You let your hidden neurosis come through. Let the discipline evolve itself. That is far from therapy, absolutely far from therapy.

Therapy involves the notion of testimony and support, enormous support: "When I was involved with this particular meditation practice three years ago, three months ago, I was saved. Now I can meditate. I

can do a beautiful job with myself; I'm a good general, I am a good busboy, a good postman. I find that my intelligence has been sharpened when I work on Madison Avenue lately," or whatever. [*Laughs; laughter*] The reason why the practice of meditation is not therapy is because it does not particularly provide or even ask for support or testimony about anything at all. When you begin to ask for testimony, that is a sign of weakness; you feel that you need support. *You* need support, the personal support that somebody else is doing it and that person is doing okay, so therefore you can do it. That is the approach to therapy. But meditation experience is personal experience, extremely personal experience, real experience. You begin to feel alone because you are what you are. You don't feel alone in the sense that you feel that you need somebody else's support. Rather, you can do it yourself. Being alone and being lonely is not a big problem anymore. You begin to feel delight in being alone, as a matter of fact. Aloneness is part of not needing support or testimony. You do not need therapy; you just need your life. There is a new dimension to practicing meditation from that point of view. There is a sense of openness and a sense of not needing further support—you can do it yourself, you're working with yourself, fundamentally, basically. It is up to you, but it is also your own creation at the same time. When we begin to relate with that principle of aloneness, the notion of independence, of freedom, becomes extraordinarily powerful, extraordinarily interesting, and highly creative. We do not ask questions about the nature of reality, about what is going to be good and bad for us, but we begin to pick and choose in accordance with our own dimensions, our own experience of freedom, of loneliness. You know that you are lonely already, alone already. You know that you are with nobody but yourself. Even the phenomenal world does not help. And because of that loneliness and aloneness you are able to help other people, of course. Because you feel so lonely, so alone, the rest of the world, humanity, your friends, your lovers, your relatives and parents are part of your life, because they are the expression of loneliness at the same time.

So there can be a sense of enormous openness, which largely depends upon you being open, free, and highly disciplined. Therefore, precisely, meditation is not therapy. It goes beyond therapy, because therapy involves conforming to some particular area of relative reference. The practice of meditation is the experience of totality. You can't regard it as anything at all, but it is completely universal. It covers all areas of your

life: domestic, emotional, economic, and social situations, whatever there may be.

The notion of unconditional freedom is the notion of meditation from that point of view, and therefore freedom cannot be said to be therapy. If we regard the notion of freedom as therapy, we are already in trouble, because "I am supposed to get out of this mess." So if the very meaning of therapy is regarded as freedom or the very meaning of freedom is regarded as therapy, then you are kidding yourself or somebody else is kidding you. It is like someone saying, "I tell you that you are free from now onward," and then later they tell you, "What I said to you was therapy." You feel that you have been completely deceived. [*Laughs*] You are no longer free at that point, because that approach of therapy is just purely trying to cheer you up so that you will get more involved in the mess, and you will have no hesitation about getting into the mess of confusion.

So therefore, if we say that meditation is therapy, that is an enormous disservice to the intelligence of the universe, to universal consciousness. If we say that meditation is not therapy, then we are contributing something to understanding the notion of unconditional freedom. Freedom in itself is not regarded as therapy, but it is regarded as the expression of openness and potentiality.

Question: I was interested in your saying that therapy could cheer you up, only to make you get more involved in the mess. You do prescribe seeing your neurosis though. So, in that sense, how is therapy a problem?

VCTR: What do you mean by therapy?

Q: Something that makes you a more open person. You said that therapy could cause you to have more confidence—so that you would get into the mess more.

VCTR: You could get into all kinds of trouble when you begin to use therapeutic practice. Often, when we use the term *therapy,* we are talking about how can we save ourselves from our problems. We are confronting our problems by using some kind of technique or medium. Could we wear plastic gloves, or could we use anesthetics so that we don't have to face our problems? We are afraid to relate with what we are and what our problems are. We are embarrassed to work with all that or to confront it. Such an approach is the wrong usage of the word

therapy. It is a kind of linguistic problem. Viewing it in such a way, if we are involved in therapy, that automatically means that we don't have to face our wife or our husband. Instead, we go to a therapist who is going to create a kind of numbness between us. We begin to lose the sharpness we experience with our husband or wife, the sharpness and irritation. We would like therapy to help us to get together by putting some kind of numbness or lozenge between those sharp edges. We would like therapy to numb us to that sharpness we are experiencing so intensely, so that we never have static. We would like to join together with our husband or wife, but at the same time we would like the physician to put us on anesthetics so that we don't have to go through the pain of being joined together. Then we could wake up very happy and feel ourselves already sewn together. It could work out and we could feel happy ever after. That approach has been the problem, I'm afraid. The word *therapy* has come to mean the notion of being joined together by anesthesia.

On the other hand, the word *therapy* could be used as skillful means or application for how certain parts of a jigsaw puzzle could fit together. Then therapy has the sense of application or method. In that sense, therapy should not become anesthesia, but instead is a method of sharp precision. It is the way you get yourself together, rather than a way of being anesthetized. The desire for anesthesia seems to be the problem, whether we use the term *meditation* or *therapy.* That attitude always becomes a problem.

In the true sense, therapy is not anesthesia but actual experience. That is very important. We should experience our own embarrassment, or whatever it may be, and try to link together another embarrassment, which is what the world is relating to us, rather than using any anesthetic or numbing agent to solve our problems. There's no particular hospitality involved from that point of view. To be willing to experience our world directly is the mark of our courageousness, our openness—which actually means freedom. So in other words, we could say quite seriously that freedom cannot be bought by anesthetics.

Becoming a Full Human Being

THE BASIC WORK of health professionals in general, and of psychotherapists in particular, is to become full human beings and to inspire full human-beingness in other people who feel starved about their lives. When we say a "full human being" here, we mean a person who not only eats, sleeps, walks, and talks, but someone who also experiences a basic state of wakefulness. It might seem to be very demanding to define health in terms of wakefulness, but wakefulness is actually very close to us. We can experience it. In fact, we are touching it all the time.

We are in touch with basic health all the time. Although the usual dictionary definition of *health* is, roughly speaking, "free from sickness," we should look at health as something more than that. According to the Buddhist tradition, people inherently possess buddha nature; that is, they are basically and intrinsically good. From this point of view, health is intrinsic. That is, health comes first: sickness is secondary. Health *is*. So being healthy is being fundamentally wholesome, with body and mind synchronized in a state of being which is indestructible and good. This attitude is not recommended exclusively for the patients but also for the helpers or doctors. It can be adopted mutually because this intrinsic, basic goodness is always present in any interaction of one human being with another.

There are many approaches to psychology and some of them are problematic. From the Buddhist point of view, there is a problem with any attempt to pinpoint, categorize, and pigeonhole mind and its contents very neatly. This method could be called psychological materalism. The problem with this approach is that it does not leave enough room for spontaneity or openness. It overlooks basic healthiness.

The approach to working with others that I would like to advocate is one in which spontaneity and humanness are extended to others, so that we can open to others and not compartmentalize our understanding of them. This means working first of all with our natural capacity for warmth. To begin with, we can develop warmth toward ourselves, which then expands to others. This provides the ground for relating with disturbed people, with one another, and with ourselves, all within the same framework. This approach does not rely so much on a theoretical or conceptual perspective, but it relies on how we personally experience our own existence. Our lives can be felt fully and thoroughly so that we appreciate that we are genuine and truly wakeful human beings.

When you work in this way with others, it is very powerful. When someone begins to feel that he is not being pigeonholed and that there is some genuine connection taking place between the two of you, then he begins to let go. He begins to explore you and you begin to explore him. Some kind of unspoken friendship begins to develop.

Although I am speaking as a Buddhist teacher, I do not believe that therapy should be divided into categories. We don't have to say, "Now I'm doing therapy in the Buddhist style," or "Now I'm doing it in the Western style." There is not much difference, really. If you work in the Buddhist style, it is just common sense. If you work in the Western style, that is common sense, too. Working with others is a question of being genuine and projecting that genuineness to others. The work you do doesn't have to have a title or a name particularly. It is just being ultimately decent. Take the example of the Buddha himself—he wasn't a Buddhist! If you have confidence in yourself and you develop some way of overcoming ego, then true compassion can be radiated to others. So the main point in working with people is to appreciate and manifest simplicity rather than trying to create new theories or categories of behavior. The more you appreciate simplicity, the more profound your understanding becomes. Simplicity begins to make much more sense than speculation.

The Buddhist tradition teaches the truth of impermanence, or the transitory nature of things. The past is gone and the future has not yet happened, so we work with what is here—the present situation. This actually helps us not to categorize or theorize. A fresh, living situation is taking place all the time, on the spot. This noncategorical approach comes from being fully here, rather than trying to reconnect with past

events. We don't have to look back to the past in order to see what people are made out of. Human beings speak for themselves, on the spot.

Sometimes, however, people are obsessed with their past, and you might need to talk with them about that somewhat in order to communicate with them. But it should always be done with a present orientation. It is not purely a matter of retelling stories in order to reconnect to the past, but rather it is a question of seeing that the present situation has several levels: the basic ground, which could be in the past; the actual manifestation, which is happening now; and where the present is about to go. So the present has three facets. Once you begin to approach a person's experience in that way, it comes alive. At the same time, it is not necessary to try to reach a conclusion about the future. The conclusion is already manifest in the present. There might be a case history, but that history is already dying. Actual communication takes place on the spot. By the time you sit down and say hello to the patient, that person's whole history is there.

You see, we are not trying to figure people out based on their past. Intead, we are trying to find out their case history in terms of who they are *now,* which is really the point. I always do that in interviews with my students. I ask them how old they are, whether they have been outside of America, whether they have been to Europe or Asia, what they have done, what their parents are like, and all the rest of it. But that is based on *this* person rather than on *that* person. It is quite straightforward. The people we are working with might be dwelling in the past, but we as their helpers have to know where they are *now,* what state of mind they are in at the moment. This is very important. Otherwise we may lose track of who a person is now and think of him as someone else, as if he were another personality altogether.

Patients should experience a sense of wholesomeness vibrating from you. If they do, they will be attracted to you. Usually, insanity is based on aggression, rejecting oneself or one's world. People feel that they have been cut off from communication with the world, that the world has rejected them. Either they have isolated themselves or they feel that the world is isolating them. So if there is some compassion radiating from your very presence when you walk into a room and sit down with people, if there is gentleness and willingness to include them, that is the

preliminary stage of healing. Healing comes from a simple sense of reasonability, gentleness, and full human-beingness. That goes a long way.

So the first step is to project ourselves as genuine human beings. Then beyond that, we can help others by creating a proper atmosphere around them. I am speaking literally here, extremely literally. Whether someone is at home or in an institution, the atmosphere around them should be a reflection of human dignity, and it should be physically orderly. The bed should be made, and good meals should be prepared. In that way, the person can cheer up and be able to relax in his environment.

Some people may regard the little details of the physical environment as mundane and unimportant. But very often, the disturbances people experience come from the atmosphere around them. Sometimes their parents have created chaos—a pile of dishes in the kitchen, dirty laundry in the corner, and half-cooked food. Those little things may seem incidental, but they actually affect the atmosphere a great deal. In working with people, we can present a contrast to that chaos. We can manifest an appreciation of beauty, rather than just pushing the crazy person into a corner. The appreciation of the environment is an important part of Tibetan and Zen Buddhist practice. Both traditions consider the atmosphere around oneself to be a reflection of one's individuality, and so it should be kept immaculate.

The conventional therapeutic approach is to try to straighten out people's minds first, then give them a bath, and finally help them get dressed. But I think that we have to work with the whole situation at once. The environment is very important, and yet it is often overlooked. If the patient is presented with a good meal and is acknowledged and received as a special guest, which is what he or she deserves, then we can work from there.

We are talking about creating an ideal, almost artificial life for seriously ill people, at least in the beginning, until they can pull themselves together. We may actually bathe them and clean their rooms, make their beds and cook nice meals for them. We can make their lives elegant. The basis of their neurosis is that they have experienced their lives and their world as being so ugly, so full of resentment, so dirty. The more resentful and ugly they become, the more that attitude is reinforced by society. So they never experience an atmosphere of compassionate hospitality. They are regarded as nuisances. That attitude doesn't help. People are

not really nuisances at all. They are just being themselves given their circumstances.

Therapy has to be based on mutual appreciation. If people feel it is just your "trip," they may not like the environment you create for them. You may present them with a nice tray of food, but still they may be outraged if they know that your attitude is not genuine, if they feel your generosity is hypocritical. If your approach is completely unified, if you treat your patients like princes or princesses in the fullest sense, then they may want to respond. They may actually cheer up and begin to extend themselves. They may begin to appreciate their bodies, their strength, and their existence as a whole. It is not so much a matter of finding techniques that will cure people so that you can get rid of them. Rather, it is a matter of learning how to actually include them as part of a good human society. It is important for the therapist to create an atmosphere that makes people feel welcome. That attitude should infuse the whole environment. That is the point.

The ability to work with another person's neurosis, or even their craziness, ultimately depends on how fearless you are when you deal with them or how inhibited you feel. It depends on how much you are embarrassed by somebody or how much you can actually extend yourself. In the case of a mother's relationship to her infant, there is no problem because the mother knows that the child will grow up and one day become a reasonable person. So she doesn't mind changing diapers and doing all sorts of things for her child. Whereas if you are dealing with people who are already grown up, there is some kind of basic embarrassment which has to be overcome. That embarrassment has to be transformed into compassion.

Crazy people in particular are very intuitive. They are somewhat brilliant and they pick up messages very easily, even just the flicker of your thoughts, and that goes a long way with them. Usually they chew it, or they swallow it, or they throw it out. They will make a lot out of it. So it is a question of your basic being and how open you are in those situations. You can at least make an attempt to be open at that moment, which is a tremendous commitment to training and educating yourself. Then there is the possibility of developing fearlessness.

It is necessary to work patiently with others, all the time. That is what I do with my students: I never give up on them. No matter what problems they come up with, I still say the same thing: just keep going.

If you have patience with people, they slowly change. You do have some effect on them if you are radiating your sanity. They will begin to take notice, although of course they don't want to let anybody know. They just say, "Nothing has changed. I have the same problems going on all the time." But don't give up. Something happens—if you take your time. It works!

Just do what you have to do to keep them going. They will probably keep coming back to you. You are their best friend anyway, if you don't react too neurotically. For them, you are like a memory of eating in a good restaurant. You remain the same, and they keep coming back to you. Eventually you become very good friends. So don't jump the gun. It takes time. It is an extremely long process, but if you look back at it, it is very powerful. You have to cut your own impatience and learn to love people. That is how to cultivate basic healthiness in others.

It is very important to commit yourselves to your patients fully and not just try to get rid of them after they have been cured. You shouldn't regard what you are doing as ordinary medical work. As psychotherapists you should pay more attention to your patients and share their lives. That kind of friendship is a long-term commitment. It is almost like the student-teacher relationship on the Buddhist path. You should be proud of that.

The Meeting of Buddhist and Western Psychology

Experience and Theory

Traditional Buddhist psychology emphasizes the importance of direct experience in psychological work. If one relies upon theory alone, then something basic is lost. From the Buddhist viewpoint, the study of theory is only a first step and must be completed by training in the direct experience of mind itself, in oneself and in others.

In Buddhist tradition, this experiential aspect is developed through the practice of meditation, a firsthand observation of mind. Meditation in Buddhism is not a religious practice, but rather a way of clarifying the actual nature of mind and experience. Traditionally, meditation training is said to be threefold, including shila (discipline), samadhi (the actual practice of meditation), and prajna (insight).

Shila is the process of simplifying one's general life and eliminating unnecessary complications. In order to develop a genuine mental discipline, it is first necessary to see how we continually burden ourselves with extraneous activities and preoccupations. In Buddhist countries, shila might involve following a particular rule of life as a monk or a nun, or adopting the precepts appropriate to a Buddhist layperson. In the Western secular context, shila might just involve cultivating an attitude of simplicity toward one's life in general.

Second is samadhi, or meditation, which is the heart of Buddhist experiential training. This practice involves sitting with your attention resting lightly and mindfully on your breath. The further discipline of meditation practice is to note when your attention has wandered from

the breath and to bring it back to breathing as your focus. An attitude of bare attention is taken toward the various phenomena, including thoughts, feelings, and sensations, that arise in your mind and body during practice. Meditation practice could be called a way of making friends with oneself, which points to the fact that it is an experience of nonaggression. In fact, meditation is traditionally called the practice of dwelling in peace. The practice of meditation is thus a way of experiencing one's basic being, beyond habitual patterns.

Shila is the ground of meditation and samadhi is the actual path of the practice. The fruition is prajna, or the insight that beings to develop through one's meditation. In the experience of prajna, one begins to see directly and concretely how the mind actually functions, its mechanics and reflexes, moment to moment. Prajna is traditionally called discriminating awareness, which does not mean discriminating in the sense of developing bias. Rather prajna is unbiased knowledge of one's world and one's mind. It is discriminating in the sense of sorting out confusion and neurosis.

Prajna is immediate and nonconceptual insight, but at the same time it provides the basic inspiration for intellectual study. Because one has seen the actuality of one's own mental functioning, there is a natural desire to clarify and articulate what one has experienced. And there is a spontaneous curiosity about how others have expressed the nature and operation of mind. But at the same time, while one's immediate insight leads to study, it is necessary to maintain an ongoing discipline of meditative training. In that way, concepts never become merely concepts, and one's psychological work remains alive, fresh, and well grounded.

In the Buddhist culture of Tibet, where I was born and educated, a balance was always maintained between experiential training and theory. In my own upbringing, time was allotted in our regular monastic schedule to both study and meditation practice. During the year, there would also be special times set aside for intensive study and also for meditation retreats. It was part of our Buddhist tradition that such a balance was necessary for genuine learning to occur.

When I came to the West, to England in 1963, I was quite surprised to find that in Western psychology, theory is emphasized so much more than experience. Of course this made Western psychology immediately accessible to someone from another culture such as myself. Western psychologists do not ask you to practice, but just tell you what they are

about from the very beginning. I found this approach very straightforward and something of a relief. But at the same time, one wonders about the profundity of a tradition that relies so heavily on concepts and opens its doors so easily.

On the other hand, Western psychologists do seem intuitively to recognize the need for greater emphasis on the direct experience of mind. Perhaps this is what has led so many psychologists to take an interest in Buddhism. Especially in relation to Zen, they are attracted to the enigma of it. And they are tantalized by the flavor of immediate experience, the possibility of enlightenment, and the impression of profundity. Such people seem to be looking to Buddhism for something they find lacking in their own traditions. This interest strikes me as appropriate, and in this respect Buddhism has something important to offer.

One important question always seems to come up when Western psychologists begin to study Buddhism. Does one have to become a Buddhist in order to learn about Buddhism? The answer is that of course one does not, but it must be asked in return, what does one want to learn? What Buddhism really has to teach the Western psychologist is how to relate more closely with his own experience, in its freshness, its fullness, and its immediacy. To do this, one does not have to become a Buddhist, but one does have to practice meditation. It is certainly possible to study only the theory of Buddhist psychology. But in doing so, one would miss the point. Without experience to rely on, one would end up simply interpreting Buddhist notions through Western concepts. A good taste of meditation is actually necessary in working with oneself and others. It is a tremendous help, whatever interest one may take in Buddhism as such.

Sometimes it is very hard to communicate to Westerners the importance of the experiential dimension. After we had started Samye Ling, our meditation center in Scotland, soon after I came from India to England, we found that a great many people with psychological problems came to us for help. They had been in all sorts of different therapies, and many of them were quite neurotic. They looked on us as physicians carrying out medical practice and wanted us to cure them. In working with these people I found that there was a frequent obstacle. Such people often wanted to take a purely theoretical approach, rather than actually experiencing and working with their neuroses. They wanted to understand their neuroses intellectually: where they themselves went wrong,

how their neuroses developed, and so on. They often were not willing to let go of that approach.

The Training of a Therapist

In the training of a psychotherapist, theoretical and experiential training should be properly balanced. We combine these two elements in our Naropa Institute psychology program: one begins with a taste of meditation, then applies oneself to study, then experiences meditation more fully, then does more intensive study, and so forth. This kind of approach actually has an interesting effect: it enhances one's appreciation of what one is doing. The experience of one's own mind whets the appetite for further study. And the study increases one's interest in observing one's own mental process through meditation.

In addition, when study is combined with meditation practice, it has a different flavor. Where direct experience is lacking, study tends to be mainly memorizing terms and definitions and trying to convince oneself of their validity. When balanced with meditative discipline, study takes on much more life and reality. It develops clarity about how the mind works and how that knowledge can be expressed. In this way, study and practice help one another enormously, and each becomes more real and satisfying. It is like eating a sandwich—because of the bread, you appreciate the meat much more.

One question comes up when you try to balance the experiential and theoretical sides of training. How much time should be spent on each? Generally I would say it should be roughly equal. But at the same time the amount of hours put into practice, for example, is not as important as the attitude with which it is done. If the trainee is wholehearted enough, and if his practice is sufficiently intent, then his meditation will have its proper role and permeate his study and daily life.

All of this is not to say that there is no experiential training in Western psychology. But, from the Buddhist viewpoint, it is greatly underemphasized. And when it does occur, it seems to happen almost exclusively in the interpersonal situation of people talking to one another, such as the classical training in psychoanalysis. Some Western psychologists have asked me whether the direct experience of meditation practice is really necessary. They have wanted to know whether the "interpersonal train-

ing" is not enough. To this I would answer that the interpersonal training is not adequate in itself. First, it is necessary to study and experience one's own mind. Then one can study and experience accurately the mind in the interpersonal situation.

We can see this by looking at how the Buddhist tradition of abhidharma works. First, there is an exploration of how the mind evolves in itself and how it functions. The expression of this is the first half of the abhidharma. The second half is concerned with how that mind begins to respond to things from outside itself. This parallels how a child develops. In the beginning, he is mainly concerned with himself. Later, in adolescence, his world begins to grow bigger and bigger.

In order to understand the interpersonal situation correctly, you have to know yourself in the beginning. Once you know the style of the dynamics of your own mind, then you can begin to see how that style works in dealing with others. And, in fact, on the basis of knowing oneself, the interpersonal knowledge comes naturally. You discover that somebody has developed his own mind. Then you can experience how the two minds interact with each other. This leads to the discovery that there is no such thing as outside mind and inside mind at all. So "mind" is really two minds meeting together, which is the same mind in some sense.

Therefore, the more you learn about your own mind, the more you learn about other people's minds. You begin to appreciate other worlds, other people's life situations. You are learning to extend your vision beyond what is just there in your immediate situation, on the spot, so your mind is opened that much more.

And that reflects in your work with others. It makes you more skillful in deeds and also gives you more of a sense of warmth and compassion, so you become more accommodating of others.

The Viewpoint of Health

Buddhist psychology is based on the notion that human beings are fundamentally good. Their most basic qualities are positive ones: openness, intelligence, and warmth. Of course this viewpoint has it philosophical and psychological expressions in concepts such as bodhichitta (awakened mind), and tathagatagarbha (birthplace of enlightened ones). But this

idea is ultimately rooted in experience—the experience of goodness and worthiness in oneself and others. This understanding is very fundamental and is the basic inspiration for Buddhist practice and Buddhist psychology.

Coming from a tradition that stresses human goodness, it was something of a shock for me to encounter the Western tradition of original sin. When I was at Oxford University, I studied Western religious and philosophical traditions with interest and found the notion of original sin quite pervasive. One of my early experiences in England was attending a seminar with Archbishop Anthony Blum. The seminar was on the notion of grace, and we got into a discussion of original sin. The Buddhist tradition does not see such a notion as necessary at all, and I expressed this viewpoint. I was surprised at how angry the Western participants became. Even the Orthodox, who might not emphasize original sin as much as the Western traditions, still held it as a cornerstone of their theology.

In terms of our present discussion, it seems that this notion of original sin does not just pervade Western religious ideas. It actually seems to run throughout Western thought as well, especially psychological thought. Among patients, theoreticians, and therapists alike, there seems to be great concern with the idea of some original mistake which causes later suffering—a kind of punishment for that mistake. One finds that a sense of guilt or being wounded is quite pervasive. Whether or not such people actually believe in the idea of original sin, or in God for that matter, they seem to feel that they have done something wrong in the past and are now being punished for it.

It seems that this feeling of basic guilt has been passed down from one generation to another and seems to pervade many aspects of Western life. For example, teachers often think that if children do not feel guilty, then they won't study properly and consequently won't develop as they should. Therefore, many teachers feel that they have to do something to push the child, and guilt seems to be one of the chief techniques they use. This occurs even on the level of improving reading and writing. The teacher looks for errors: "Look, you made a mistake. What are you going to do about it?" From the child's point of view, learning is then based on trying not to make mistakes, on trying to prove you actually are not bad. It is entirely different when you approach the child more positively: "Look how much you have improved, therefore we can

go further." In the latter case, learning becomes an expression of one's wholesomeness and innate intelligence.

The problem with this notion of original sin or mistake is that it acts very much as a hindrance to people. At some point, it is of course necessary to realize one's shortcomings. But if one goes too far with that, it kills any inspiration and can destroy one's vision as well. So in that way, it really is not helpful, and in fact it seems unnecessary. As I mentioned, in Buddhism we do not have any comparable ideas of sin and guilt. Obviously there is the idea that one should avoid mistakes. But there is not anything comparable to the heaviness and inescapability of original sin.

According to the Buddhist perspective, there are problems, but they are temporary and superficial defilements that cover over one's basic goodness (tathagatagarbha). This viewpoint is a positive and optimistic one. But, again, we should emphasize that this viewpoint is not purely conceptual. It is rooted in the experience of meditation and in the healthiness it encourages. There are temporary habitual neurotic patterns that develop based on past experience, but these can be seen through. It is just this that is studied in the abhidharma: how one thing succeeds another, how volitional action originates and perpetuates itself, how things snowball. And, most important, abhidharma studies how, through meditation practice, this process can be cut through.

The attitude that results from the Buddhist orientation and practice is quite different from the "mistake mentality." One actually experiences mind as fundamentally pure, that is, healthy and positive, and "problems" as temporary and superficial defilements. Such a viewpoint does not quite mean "getting rid" of problems, but rather shifting one's focus. Problems are seen in a much broader context of health: one begins to let go of clinging to one's neuroses and to step beyond obsession and identification with them. The emphasis is no longer on the problems themselves but rather on the ground of experience through realizing the nature of mind itself. When problems are seen in this way, then there is less panic and everything seems more workable. When problems arise, instead of being seen as purely threats, they become learning situations, opportunities to find out more about one's own mind, and to continue on one's journey.

Through practice, which is confirmed by study, the inherent healthiness of your mind and others' minds is experienced over and over. You see that your problems are not all that deeply rooted. You see that you

can make literal progress. You find yourself becoming more mindful and more aware, developing a greater sense of healthiness and clarity as you go on, and this is tremendously encouraging.

Ultimately, this orientation of goodness and healthiness comes out of the experience of egolessness, a notion that has created a certain amount of difficulty for Western psychologists. "Egolessness" does not mean that nothing exists, as some have thought, a kind of nihilism. Instead, it means that you can let go of your habitual patterns and then when you let go, you genuinely let go. You do not re-create or rebuild another shell immediately afterward. Once you let go, you do not just start all over again. Egolessness is having the trust to not rebuild again at all and experiencing the psychological healthiness and freshness that goes with not rebuilding. The truth of egolessness can only be experienced fully through meditation practice.

The experience of egolessness encourages a real and genuine sympathy toward others. You cannot have genuine sympathy with ego because then that would mean that your sympathy would be accompanied by some kind of defense mechanisms. For example, you might try to refer everything back to your own territory when you work with someone, if your own ego is at stake. Ego interferes with direct communication, which is obviously essential in the therapeutic process. Egolessness, on the other hand, lets the whole process of working with others be genuine and generous and free-form. That is why, in the Buddhist tradition, it is said that without egolessness, it is impossible to develop real compassion.

The Practice of Therapy

The task of the therapist is to help his patients connect back with their own fundamental healthiness and goodness. Prospective patients come to us feeling starved and alienated. More important than giving them a set of techniques for battling their problems, we need to point them toward the experience of the fundamental ground of health which exists in them. It might be thought that this is asking a great deal, particularly when we are working with confronting someone who has a history of problems. But the sanity of basic mind is actually close at hand and can be readily experienced and encouraged.

Of course, it goes without saying that the therapist must experience

his own mind in this way to begin with. Through meditation practice, his clarity and warmth toward himself is given room to develop and then can be expanded outward. Thus his meditation and study provide the ground for working with disturbed people, with other therapists, and with himself in the same framework all the time. Obviously, this is not so much a question of theoretical or conceptual perspective, but of how we personally experience our own lives. Our existence can be felt fully and thoroughly so that we appreciate that we are genuine, true human beings. This is what we can communicate to others and encourage in them.

One of the biggest obstacles to helping our patients in this way is, again, the notion of a "mistake," and the preoccupation with the past that results from this. Many of our patients will want to unravel their past. But this can be a dangerous approach if it goes too far. If you follow this thread, you have to look back to your conception, then to your family's experiences before that, to your great-grandfathers, and on and on. It could go a long way back and get very complicated.

The Buddhist viewpoint emphasizes the impermanence and the transitoriness of things. The past is gone, and the future has not yet happened, so we work with what is here: the present situation. This actually helps us not to categorize or to theorize. A fresh, living situation is actually taking place all the time, on the spot. This noncategorizing approach comes from being fully here rather than trying to follow up some past event. We do not have to look back to the past in order to see what we ourselves or other people are made out of. Things speak for themselves, right here and now.

Buddhism and Western Psychology

In my days at Oxford and since then, I have been impressed by some of the genuine strengths of Western psychology. It is open to new viewpoints and discoveries. It maintains a critical attitude toward itself. And it is the most experiential of Western intellectual disciplines.

But at the same time, considered from the viewpoint of Buddhist psychological tradition, there is definitely something missing in the Western approach. This missing element, as we have suggested throughout this introduction, is the acknowledgment of the primacy of immediate experience. It is here that Buddhism presents a fundamental challenge to Western therapeutics and offers a viewpoint and method that could revolutionize Western psychology.

Creating an Environment of Sanity

WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY and the Buddhist tradition have had an interesting history together. Western psychologists first studied Buddhist philosophy as a "second thought"—or secondary interest. But at the beginning of the century, as Zen and Theravadin Buddhist meditation began to be more widely practiced rather than purely studied, psychologists became interested in these disciplines and in further aspects of Buddhism, particularly the Tibetan vajrayana tradition. In fact, we could say that the hospitality created by the interest and efforts of Western psychologists is what has made it possible for us now to present a proper and full understanding of Buddhism on this continent. In particular, the interaction between Buddhist and Western psychology has provided fertile ground for the establishment of Buddhism in the West.

In this article I would like to present Buddhist psychology and practice in further detail and also mention briefly some differences and similarities between the Western psychological disciplines and the Buddhist approach to working with people. Both the Western psychological tradition and the Buddhist tradition place great emphasis on the importance of upbringing and environment in determining the way people develop psychologically. We could say quite safely that, from the Buddhist point of view, people's basic psychological problems come from neglect in their early years or from the fact that their environment wasn't adequate. This is one of the key places where people develop psychological problems. A whole range of psychological problems comes from individuals being mismanaged by their parents or by their teachers in school. In most cases, parents and teachers have good intentions, but often the environment they create for children is not adequate because of lack of

money or lack of skillful means in handling situations. There is some shortcoming in the environment.

This is not to say that parents or teachers or uncles and aunts have to be rich. But they can be skillful enough to provide some psychological hospitality in the early stages of child rearing. There should be a basic sense of welcome, a basic sense of health in the child's environment. There should be some goodness. On the whole, there should be no lying or twisting of logic or pretending that things are other than what they are. If those types of distortion are allowed to build up, then children—who, by the way, are extremely intelligent—begin to see through the deception around them and the unskillfulness that pervades their upbringing. But even though they may see through what is happening, nonetheless, they become victims of their upbringing and are affected by it in later life. This can produce inferiority complexes or some kinds of schizophrenia when the children become adults. Worst of all is the basic attitude of hatefulness and resentment toward individuals; and as adults, children brought up in an atmosphere of hatefulness will direct that hatefulness toward their children. Whenever there is aggression and disliking in any aspect of the environment as you are growing up, that is the ground of insanity, from the Buddhist point of view.

Insanity does not usually come from passion; it usually comes from aggression, from resentment and disliking. By *insanity* here we mean hurting others and hurting yourself, so that there is no gentleness and no sense of helping others. So insanity and aggression are closely connected.

The point of aggression is to keep yourself intact. You refuse to deal with anybody else at all. In fact, if anybody touches you, you want to attack them. It is very straightforward, in that sense. You don't want to take part in the world. That is the problem of aggression. So insanity based on aggression comes from the fact that a person doesn't want to relate with the world because the world has been too punishing to them, particularly in their early years. In some cases, too much hospitality is a form of aggression: it can make people claustrophobic, as well. Hospitality becomes smothering: parents want to impose too much hospitality on their children. In that case, the situation is still unbalanced; there is still a lack of sensitivity in the environment.

Environment is extremely important, not only in how you treat your children but in how you treat yourself. It includes both animate and inanimate situations: your physical living situation as well as the people

around you—your parents, teachers, students, maids, governesses, or whatever. Environment includes your relationship with your business partners, your driver, your waitress, whomever you meet. To be sane and to provide a ground of sanity for others, you need to be sensitive to environment. If you create an unbalanced or aggressive environment, it will produce a sense of separation between you and others—you and your world. Then you tend to blame everything on somebody else, which in turn brings blame onto yourself as well, at the same time.

Western education has taught us to think of ourselves as free men and women, which can be distorted into thinking that we have a perfect right to do anything we want. If anything goes wrong, we feel that we can blame somebody else, rather than ourselves. Similarly, Western psychological theories of ego have sometimes been used by psychologists to tell patients and students that they should build up their egos in such a way that they blame somebody else when things don't go their way. This is not at all being sensitive to environment.

The Western tradition has taught us that we have a tremendous personal dignity and confidence. The distortion of this is to feel that if anything goes wrong, we can find a scapegoat somewhere outside of ourselves. We say, "This went wrong; it must be somebody's fault." When people do that consistently, then it can lead to demands for rights, riots, and all sorts of complaints, which are always based on blaming somebody else. But we never blame "me." The extreme outcome of this approach is that we feel we want to rule the world, and in doing that, we display a tremendous personal ego. Ultimately, we could become someone like Hitler or Mussolini. These people represent the ego of an entire nation, which says, "It's not our fault. It is our nation's pride; we have our pride and glory and dignity. We are in the right." It is a gigantic ego world based on a fundamental separation from our environment. This is an extreme example, but distorting dignity into egotism can have these results.

The question for us as psychologists is how to work with people who have been brought up, to some degree, in this way of thinking, and who have developed deep mistrust and resentment of the world. How can we help them to let go of their aggression, which is self-aggression as well as aggression toward the world?

The key point in overcoming aggression is to develop natural trust in yourself and in your environment, your world. In Buddhism, this trust

in yourself is called maitri. Maitri is natural gentleness and friendliness to yourself, which very much includes gentleness and absence of aggression in relating with the world. Maitri can actually be cultivated in yourself and in other people; you can cultivate gentleness and warmth. When you express kindness to others, then they in turn begin to find natural warmth within themselves. So the Buddhist approach to working with people—especially those who have been brought up in bad environments—is to provide a gentle, accommodating environment for therapy and teaching.

According to the Buddhist teachings, although we acknowledge that people's problems may have been caused by their past upbringing, we feel that the way to undo problems is to cultivate that person's maitri on the spot. This is done by working with the person's immediate environment rather than by delving into his or her past. Buddhism does not use the Western analytical approach of tracing back to the roots of neurosis in a person's past. Neither are such things as encounter therapy or primal therapy used. Buddhist psychology works with cultivating good behavior patterns, rather than trying to analyze the person's problems. At the same time, we could say that any capable Buddhist master, or teacher, including the Lord Buddha himself, acts in the best sense as a psychologist. However, instead of attempting to analyze a person's problems in terms of his or her internal psychology, a Buddhist teacher might be more apt to try to improve his student's table manners. So the Buddhist psychological approach looks at a person's state of mind in terms of a person's behavior and the larger world around the person. When a student has bad table manners, that usually reflects a general lack of environmental awareness. This is usually corrected directly, either by means of the sitting practice of meditation or else by teaching the student to be generally more mindful of what he is doing.

This approach is similar to that of the early Buddhist monastic tradition. The monks and nuns were supposed to have thirteen articles or possessions when they took ordination, and they were supposed to keep those thirteen articles clean and good. Those thirteen possessions were everything they had; they were not supposed to lose any one of them or mismanage any one of them. The point of those rules was to teach them how to become sane by dealing with the environment—and dealing with your own state of mind comes naturally out of that.

A story is told about Ananda, the Buddha's personal attendant, who

had the desire to engage in a long period of fasting. He began to grow feeble and weak; he couldn't sit and meditate, so finally the Buddha told him, "Ananda, if there is no food, there is no body. If there is no body, there is no dharma. If there is no dharma, there is no enlightenment. Therefore go back and eat." That is the basic logic of the Buddhist teachings and of Buddhist psychology. We can actually be decent and sane on the spot, not through extreme measures but by managing our life properly, and thereby cultivating maitri.

One of the fundamental problems seems to be that people feel they are unable to be gentle and relate with the world, with their environment. At Naropa Institute in the psychology program, our foundation is that we can trust our own basic goodness. Human beings are capable of expressing maitri. They are capable of opening themselves up. Basic goodness is the potential that every human being has to express gentleness and warmth in themselves. Basic goodness is not necessarily *solid* goodness, but just *basic* goodness, unconditional goodness. If people can experience that personally, then they find they really don't have any fundamental argument or resentment. We *can* be open to situations; we can relate with our environment, our world, in that way. And from that, the neurosis in the world can be reduced: because *we* don't put aggression out into the world, therefore the world does not feed back any further aggression toward us.

As psychologists, we have to realize this for ourselves first; then we can work with others in this way as well. We can provide a gentle, nonaggressive, warm environment for disturbed individuals. It is a question of feeling a fundamental connection to others. You have to be a people-loving person to begin with. That means you have to love yourself as well, which is maitri: you don't just regard psychology as a J-O-B. You don't say, "I have to go to my job, my work, and suffer sweat and tears." Rather you just do your work with people as if you were cooking for yourself, as if you were peeling potatoes and cooking vegetables and boiling your rice, chopping your meat. When you prepare a good meal, you don't regard that activity as a J-O-B.

Approaching your livelihood as purely a "job" is particularly a problem in American culture. People regard their work and their family life, home life, as very separate. But if you like people, then you like to work with them. And if you like them, you can help them to like themselves. You find that you miss them; you actually want to be with them. They

might be quite demanding, but still you are not tired of them. Liking others is also based on maitri: because you like yourself, therefore you like other people, and you are willing to open yourself and invite everybody in. That brings tremendous fresh air into your system. So it is very important to develop friendliness toward yourself, or maitri; then you like others, and you can proceed along.

There are no tricks involved. We are not trying to talk people out of or into anything. We are not trying to talk people out of their insanity or talk them into sanity. In any therapy session, if the therapist feels he has the answer, and he is going to tell it to the patient who doesn't have it, that is a problem. On the other hand, we are afraid to say to somebody, "I think you need to shape up!" We think we should have all the answers, but at the same time, we are afraid to tell the simple truth. We try everything so that we don't have to tell the truth.

The main point is to learn to tell the truth to your patients. Then they will respond to you, because there is power in telling the truth rather than bending our logic to fit their neurosis. Truth always works. There always has to be basic honesty; that is the source of trust. When someone sees that you are telling the truth, then they will realize further that you are saying something worthwhile and trustworthy. It always works. There are no special tips on how to trick people into sanity by not telling the truth. I don't think there can be such a thing at all. At least I haven't found it in dealing with my own students. Sometimes telling the truth is very painful to them, but they begin to realize it is the truth, and they appreciate it sooner or later.

It is also important to realize that you don't have to have control over others. You see, that is exactly the truth situation: you do not have all the answers; you are not assuming control over people. Instead, you are trying to tell the truth—in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. You may hope that you can produce results, that there will be some progress from telling the truth, but it is important to relate openly with a person, without expectations. To begin with, you can say things like, "How are you? Who are you? How are you behaving yourself?" That is important, rather than what results you get.

This is not a linguistic twist of any kind: just be honest and straightforward—and be good at it. In some ways, disturbed people are the most intelligent people. They can tell right from left the minute you open your mouth. Right away, they have an idea about you, they know you,

and usually they are extremely accurate—and they are profound. So you have to learn to trust their intelligence as well. You can't think that somebody is just crazy, and therefore you have to reshape him and make him into an acceptable person in society. The enlightened approach is to work with patients, channel them, *as they are.* The approach is to respect their ability to express accuracy. Sometimes, when people have psychological problems, they give up on conventional logic and come up with their own neurotic logic. Nevertheless, there is still truth in them. They are very accurate. It is very stunning sometimes: you wonder who is sane, who is not sane. You have to trust and be willing to let go and take a chance.

If you are not willing to open yourselves fully in dealing with the neurosis of the world, then you begin to develop a system to put people into pigeonholes. It is very dangerous for a therapist, or for anybody who is working with psychological situations, to put people in pigeonholes. "If patients shake, that means this. If they stutter, that means that." Pigeonholing behavior patterns in people is not helpful. Instead you should look into a person's basic healthiness; you should look for a person's basic goodness. You should ask, where is that? You should look into where the patient's *health* is coming from. No matter how energetic and crazy a person is—where is that energy coming from? Someone might be acting paranoid and critical, but where is that accuracy coming from? They could be extremely neurotic and destructive, but where is the basic pinpoint of that energy? If you can look at people from that point of view, from the point of view of basic goodness, then there is definitely something you can do to help others.

One method of working with basic healthiness that is used in the Buddhist tradition is to give people meditation instruction. This can be a very good technique for helping people with psychological problems, depending on the severity of their disturbance and whether they are open to meditation. Through meditation, you are trying to help people ride on the energy of their minds, which is very, very powerful. If you can tell them how to do it properly, it can be fantastic. But without proper training, introducing the technique of meditation can be problematic. So you should be very careful that you don't become gurus to your patients. However, I think that introducing the sitting practice of meditation is an excellent idea in many cases.

The point of introducing sitting practice to a person is that there is

always *some* little connection to basic goodness that a person can contact on the simple level of their sense perceptions. Even without meditation practice, that contact can be made. If our patients are artists, musicians, or connoisseurs of food, or if they even like food or like buying clothes, there is something to work with. As long as there is a connection through any sense perception, any touching of any kind, it involves the person with the world, with their environment. This is the basic approach we discussed earlier: cultivating people's awareness of their environment in which they can learn to appreciate themselves. Everyone has some connection with his or her environment, and any connection they may have to the world should be cultivated and awakened further.

In the early level of therapy, we cannot work only with the emotions. We have to work with a person's connection with the real world, with the environment. For example, people's relationship with their husband or their wife can be approached in terms of how they touch their husband, how they touch their wife, how they kiss, how they hug, rather than how you as the therapist can transform or solve the problems in their relationship. Just work at the concrete level. You might even talk to someone about how she takes her husband's shirt to bed and how she smells it, how she feels it. Anything—as long as it is concrete.

Basic sanity applies to every person, no matter how disturbed he or she may seem. It is not true that, if someone has seemingly gone too far into neurosis, we can't do anything. We *can* help people, even those who have gone too far, beyond the regular channels of communication. The basic point is to evoke some gentleness, some kindness, some basic goodness, some contact. When we set up an environment for people to be treated, it should be a wholesome environmental situation. A very disturbed or withdrawn patient might not respond right away—it might take a long time. But if a general sense of loving-kindness is communicated, then eventually there can be a cracking of the cast-iron quality of neurosis: it can be worked with. This can be arduous. But it is possible, definitely possible.

One basic point is, obviously, to not go along with people's craziness, although you appreciate them. You can't go along with craziness of any kind at all, even the slightest bit, even your *own* craziness. You do not have to be heavy-handed, particularly, but as we have said, you can work with whatever connection a person may have, any little simple thing. Try to work with the pinpoint of the situation by being very practical

and ordinary. Working with environment basically means bringing people down to earth. If a person suddenly loses his gravity and floats up to the moon, he wants to come back to earth: he may be willing to become sane. At that point, you can teach him something. He will be so thankful to feel the gravity on the earth. You can use that logic in every situation. Earth is good. If somebody is dancing in the sky and breathing air, that is worse than if he is sitting on the earth, eating dirt—which has more potential. It's as simple as that! But at the same time, as therapists, we also have to ground ourselves first. Otherwise, we become more patient than therapist, which doubles the confusion. So we have to come down to earth. Then we can work with others.

Intrinsic Health

A CONVERSATION WITH HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

I HAVE NOT BEEN to medical school myself, or been a nurse or doctor, but I would like to indicate, from the Buddhist point of view, how to become a helper and a useful person in relating with other people.

HEALTH

The dictionary definition of *health* is, roughly speaking, "free from sickness." However we could look at it as something more than that. According to Shambhala tradition, people are basically and intrinsically good; or in Buddhist terms, people inherently possess Buddha nature. That is, from these points of view, health is intrinsic. That is, health comes first; sickness is secondary. Health *is*. This attitude is one of being fundamentally wholesome, with body and mind synchronized in a state of being which is indestructible and good. This attitude is not recommended exclusively for the patients or for the helpers or doctors. It can be adopted mutually because intrinsic goodness is always present in any interaction of one human being with another.

FAITH

A second consideration, which comes out of the first, is faith. Commonly, faith means having religious conviction or having trust in someone who has proved himself to be good. But in this case, faith is based

on a recognition of the intrinsic goodness of the helpers and the helpees, which exists constantly. When we communicate with anyone at all, there is a ground of trust, faith, or mutual inspiration which comes from acknowledging each other's basic goodness. Because of that faith, individuals can begin to learn to help themselves, work with themselves, and take some pride in their existence. Such pride is not on the level of vanity or one-upmanship, but it is the general sense of physical well-being. If there is not that sense of physical well-being, then when you get sick, things get much worse. You actually want to be sick, want to die, and you begin to give up. So a general sense of physical well-being from both helper and helpee's point of view seems to be very desirable and even necessary. By physical well-being I'm not talking about extravagance—buying expensive clothes, for instance—but about paying attention to your existence. There should be some sense of discipline throughout the day for both helpers and helpees. Because of this, nothing is done haphazardly. The minute you get up, you take a certain attitude in facing your world in the way you take a shower, brush your teeth, shave, wash your hair, and choose what to wear. In getting ready to leave your home and in just being yourself, some kind of tremendous dignity and elegance could take place. You could begin to "taste" your own mind and your own body. In that way, you are not working with a particular medical technique alone, but with the creation of an entire atmosphere; how you set up the room, how you handle yourself, how you *are*.

Working with Sickness

A lot of upsets are invited by inattention and by being unnecessarily cranky, unnecessarily slothful. The feeling is that you couldn't care less, you are just strung out, voluntarily in many cases. You may begin to develop a sense of protest against the world of health. So you invite all the worms, germs, and flies by being sloppy. There is no dignity, no intrinsic goodness in that. However, if the helpers have created a sense of well-being in their own lives, this could help to inspire the helpees. In that regard, "tasting" one's mind and body is very important.

The actual application of these principles is based on the bodhisattva vow, in which you are willing to become anything to serve anybody.

You're willing to become a bridge, a ship, a train, a motorcar, chopsticks, knives and spoons, a comb. Anything that anybody uses, you are. You become a vehicle for people's well-being. Anybody's well-being. All sentient beings' well-being. With this attitude, you are not there only when someone is sick, shying away when they are not sick.

Taking care of sick people in their homes is a good example. Whether things go well or not, you are always available. The idea is one of taking a human being, responding and working with that person, whether that person is doing fine or experiencing terrible turmoil. There is some kind of even-temperedness and a natural sense of working together, which is the bodhisattva ideal. That bridge can be crossed by anybody, anytime, all the time, whether people are happy or sad, desperate or relaxed. It serves to bind them all together.

Madness

Our last issue is madness. Even though you cure a person of a particular disease, or particular problems, you still could be propagating each other's madness. When your health is good and you are highly fit, then you might be even more well equipped to conduct your madness, to propagate your madness any way you can. The minute you get hit by sickness, inconvenienced physically, you feel, "Maybe I'm doing something wrong." But when you have been cured, you may feel that you are okay. Then you can once again propagate all sorts of madness. So in being cured or in the process of curing, or being helped or in the process of helping, it is always necessary to take on the greater responsibility of not creating the fundamental disease, or madness. Madness is the result of not being able to synchronize body and mind together properly. Our goal is to create "Great Eastern Sun vision," which is the synchronizing of body and mind to uncover our basic health and to overcome madness.

Discussion

Audience: There are times when we may see someone who has multiple complaints. We check him out and find there's nothing physically wrong. We don't necessarily want just to give him pills, and we are faced with the situation of realizing that the best thing he could probably do would be to sit, to meditate. Should we go ahead and . . .

Chögyam Trungpa: I would leave it up to you. That's why you are there. You see, people have to change their cultural preconceptions: doctors have a particular label, and psychotherapists have a particular label, and there's nothing in between the two so far in this society. So people jump back and forth between those two roles. Our role is definitely to create some kind of intermediate situation in which we could accommodate both practices without becoming extreme. You don't have to create an encounter group while having your teeth fixed. You just relate with what's needed. At the same time, there has to be some attention to space and to the physical atmosphere, including how the doctors and nurses look, and how they conduct themselves in that particular atmosphere. When patients come into a treatment situation, they may have a sense of anxiety, a sense of hope, or a sense of complete negativity. It is a very sensitive matter to bring them into the right situation and work with them. The main point is that they are not stuck with their sickness. If a person regards sickness as an enemy, then his body has no working basis to be well. He thinks his body is invaded by enemies and he goes to the doctor to get rid of these foreigners occupying his castle. And once that's taken care of, it's all over. So no relationship is established. There is another problem which goes back even further—the concept of death as the archenemy, where we try to avoid death every minute, every second. There has to be more emphasis on creating an atmosphere of help. Sickness is a message, and it can be cured if the right situation is created.

A: In working with people in a professional practice, is there a way to help people develop more psychological space?

CT: This might seem like a very simple-minded approach, but in working with people, I think that the physical environment is extremely important. I mean the actual furniture and decoration in the room, as well as the way you are dressed, the way you smell. There should be some sense that the ground, or the environment, has been conquered, so that when the patient and doctor meet, there is what might be called sacredness involved with the whole situation. That is very important. Mind reflects body, and body is affected by the atmosphere. The idea is *recovering* rather than being *cured of* a particular disease. This approach could also be used with older people who are dying. In the process of dying they are uncovering some kind of sanity. So they could approach their death peacefully.

A: In a life-death situation, you may have to decide whether to let

someone die or stay alive. I just wonder how much karma is involved in that. It would seem as if a bodhisattva approach would always be to keep the person alive. And yet at the same time, there's also some point where you have to let them go.

CT: I think it is a very individual matter. You can't make a blanket policy or write a statement saying, "The Buddhists say . . ." Sometimes it would be much more helpful for them to go; and sometimes they should stick to it so they can experience a more fundamental feeling, or taste, of their mind and body. It's very individual.

Basically, what we have been talking about is a general sense of healthiness, or intrinsic goodness, in your state of mind. There is some sense of not giving up on life, but viewing every day as a constant journey and a constant challenge, and at the same time a constant celebration. I shouldn't say too much. It is better to experience it yourself.

From a Workshop on Psychotherapy

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche: We have a tendency in our lives to seek some kind of eternity, to confirm the seeming continuity of our past and future, so perhaps we could discuss the question of eternity and nowness. We want to stretch out the sense of a solid situation. This attempt to keep on top of the situation all the time makes us anxious, since we continually have to struggle to maintain our goal. In the practice we may discover that eternity does not exist as a long-term situation, we may discover a sense of presentness or nowness.

Questioner: Could you discuss the differences between meditation and psychotherapy?

CTR: The difference is in the individual's attitude toward undergoing the disciplines of meditation and psychotherapy. In the popular therapeutic style, the individual's attitude is one of trying to recover from something. He looks for a technique to help him get rid of, or overcome, his complaint. The meditative attitude accepts, in some sense, that you are what you are. Your neurotic aspects have to be looked at rather than thrown away. Actually, in popular Buddhism, meditation is sometimes regarded as a cure, but that's myth; nobody knows what's going to be cured, what's going to happen. When you meditate properly, the notion of cure doesn't come into the picture. If it does, then meditation becomes psychotherapy.

Q: How do you relate that to the use of the term *neurotic*?

CTR: The neurotic aspect is the counterpart of wisdom, so you cannot have one without the other. In the ideal case, when enlightenment

is attained, the neuroses are still there but they have become immense energy. Energy is the euphemism for neurosis from that point of view.

Q: In psychoanalysis and Reichian character analysis, the practitioners claim to alter the fundamental character structure and eliminate the continuation of neuroses. You seem to be saying that the neuroses, even in an enlightened being, will continue. That seems to be distinctly different.

CTR: The basic idea is that mind cannot be altered or changed, only somewhat clarified. You have to come back to what you are, rather than reform yourself into something else. Reformation seems to be going against the current, from a Buddhist point of view.

Q: Do you think that if therapy was done with the idea of helping someone become more aware of themselves it would then be consistent with the Buddhist point of view?

CTR: Basically, yes, since there is a sense of self-dislike and not wanting to see oneself, so the idea is to project a sense of friendliness to oneself. The role of the teacher or therapist is to help someone make friends with himself. That's why our psychology program is called Maitri, which means friendliness.

Q: In the Maitri experience you talk about transmuting energies, taking neurotic qualities, solid qualities, things that make one anxious and transmuting them, making them finer, giving them clarity. It seems, in psychotherapy, when one is experiencing negative feelings, that one is encouraged to express them, and in the expression there is some type of release. I am wondering how you see that in relation to say, just being in the Maitri postures, just being with the negativity and watching it. It seems to be two different ways to be with the energy.

CTR: The idea is to be able to actually see the texture, the quality, the rising and the falling of emotion. At first, we are not particularly concerned with what we are going to do with it. We just examine the whole thing. Before we do anything, we have to make a relationship with our emotional energy. Usually, when we are talking about expressing our energies, we are more concerned with the expression than with the energy itself which seems to be rushing too fast. We are afraid that it will overwhelm us. So we try to get rid of it by action.

Q: You're not saying to suppress our feelings, are you?

CTR: No, you don't keep them down. Suppressing them is also doing something with them. Suppression involves a separation between you and your emotions, and therefore you feel that you have to do

something with them. When energy is related to properly, it rises, peaks, and then returns back to one's energy bank. A recharging process takes place.

Q: Is that the transmutation process?

CTR: Yes, transmutation is turning the lead into gold.

Q: In Reichian or primal therapy they encourage people to let out all their anger or hatred. Their theory is that the reintegration of the ego will come by the expression of these energies. From your point of view, by merely relating to the energies, not expressing or repressing them, by just being with them, that a certain kind of change . . .

CTR: Once you have developed a harmonious relationship with your energy, then you can actually express it, but the style of expression becomes very sane, right to the point. The idea is that expressing energy properly is the final crescendo, the final power; it is at the level of tantra. So from the Buddhist point of view, skillful, accurate expression is the culmination of one's development. To do this you have to have a harmonious relationship to your energy, to be completely in your own energy. If you try to release your energy at an earlier point, you are wasting a lot of valuable material.

Q: So in the meantime, while we are trying to make the relationship, do we just sit with anger if it comes up?

CTR: Not necessarily. The question is whether the anger is part of you or something separate. You have to make a greater connection between the anger and yourself. So even just sitting with it is not enough. It could still be like a bad marriage where there is no relationship. Emotions are part of you, your limbs. If you don't have energy or emotion, there is no movement, no way to put things into effect. You have to regard emotions as part of you to begin with.

Q: There is a school of Western psychotherapy that doesn't believe in expressing feelings. You just experience them and talk about them. And the interpersonal relationship with a therapist is very important in the process. I don't see any conflict with your ideas and what they are saying.

CTR: It's not a doctrinal problem. It is a matter of how people actually relate to their emotions and each other.

Q: How can I be graceful and totally aware all the time? It seems impossible.

CTR: Awareness does not mean beware, be careful, ward off danger,

you might step into a puddle, so beware. That is not the kind of awareness we are talking about. We are talking about unconditional presence which is not expected to be there all the time. In fact, in order to be completely aware, you have to disown the experience of awareness. It cannot be regarded as yours—it is just there and you do not try to hold it. Then, somehow, a general clarity takes place. So awareness is a glimpse rather than a continuous state. If you hold on to awareness, it becomes self-consciousness rather than awareness. Awareness has to be unmanufactured, it has to be a natural state.

Q: What is enlightenment?

CTR: The Buddhist method is to first find out what isn't enlightenment. You begin to peel off all the skins and then you probably find that in the absence of everything, some sort of essence exists. The basic idea of enlightenment is the sanskrit word *bodhi,* which means "wakeful." Ultimately, it is an unconditional state of wakefulness, which happens to us occasionally. Intelligence is present all the time, but it gets overcrowded. So one has to peel off the excess layers to allow it to shine through.

Q: The initial impact, other than Maitri, which is a whole development of the application of Buddhism on therapy, will simply be the effect of Buddhist practices on the therapist and then maybe something will slip through no matter what the context is. Whether you are a behavior modification therapist or you're a psychoanalyst, it doesn't make any difference, it could have a really powerful effect.

CTR: I don't' see any particular problems here. At this point we are talking about taking an attitude that is based on Buddhist experience. Out of that, any kind of style or technique will be used, as long as the presentation doesn't become too dogmatic. In any case, in therapeutic situations you can't always go by the books; you have to improvise a great deal when you are working with somebody else. So I think we are not so much talking about "should be doing this" or "should be doing that," cookery book style. We are talking about developing some kind of insight. I think an understanding of the ideas of impermanence and ego is a very important contribution. Then everything is an individual application. Problems could occur if there is no relationship between the patient and the doctor. If there is no relationship, then all you can do is go along with the books, what the original prescriptions were. That seems like a second-rate therapy. If a real relationship takes place and

everything becomes a part of one's journey then I don't see any problems.

Q: Could I add another word to that? My hope when I think of what Buddhism can contribute is that it will soften or lessen the need that therapists I know seem to have which is to have a changing effect on their patients or clients. I think that is the most important part of the message. It goes along with everything you've said: you were spelling it out and I was generalizing it in terms of the tremendous pressure that the client and the therapist bring to the situation, to have something to change. And that is absolutely not what is necessary.

I was first drawn to you when I read one of your books, in which there was a voice saying just that: "Look at it, don't try to change it." It seems to me that Western therapy could go back to that. That's what I think Freud was standing for in the first place. Freud was basically an investigator, he was much less interested in curing than in finding out. If we could only encourage our colleagues to go back to that position in itself, that would be a tremendous change in a very subtle way.

CTR: Precisely.

Space Therapy and the Maitri Community

THE CREATION OF MAITRI, a Buddhist community working in a semiclinical situation with Western neurosis, is a landmark in the growth of Tibetan Buddhist teachings in America. It marks a practical and potentially valuable application of the insights of vajrayana Buddhism to emotional disorders prevalent in American society. The Tibetan vajrayana teachings of the development of ego and the ego's relationship to space have found fertile soil here. Though many people think Buddhism is concerned mainly with some kind of mystical enlightenment, the true ground for Buddhism is confusion, neurosis, and pain, as Buddha emphasized in his four noble truths. It is from the ground of neurosis that Buddhist psychology has developed. An understanding of this psychology as it has developed in Tibet is essential to understanding the work we are doing at Maitri.

In contrast to the traditional medical model of disturbances, the Buddhist approach is founded on the belief that basic sanity is operative in all states of mind. One could say, that is, that confusion is not exactly ignorant; it is actually very intricate and detailed; the confusion has a particular style that may differ from person to person. More important, confusion is two-sided: it creates a need, a demand for sanity. This hungry nature of confusion is very powerful and very important. The demand for relief or sanity that is contained in confusion is, in fact, the beginning point of Buddhism. That is what moved Buddha to sit beneath the bodhi tree twenty-five hundred years ago—to confront his confusion and find its source—after struggling vainly for seven years in various ascetic yogic disciplines.

Basically we are faced with a similar situation now in the West. We are confused, anxious, and hungry psychologically. Despite a physically luxurious prosperity, there is a tremendous amount of emotional anxiety. This anxiety has stimulated a lot of research into various types of psychotherapy, drug therapy, behavior modification, and group therapies. From the Buddhist viewpoint, this search is evidence of the nature of basic sanity operating within neurosis; almost an ape instinct to find an answer to our confusion. This confusion is the situation in which psychotherapy efforts are growing today, and appropriately, it is the basic ground of Buddhism and Buddhist psychology.

The approach of tantric Buddhism or vajrayana Buddhism, however, is not one of looking for a way out of this confused or neurotic situation. Instead, we stop our motion toward finding cures and examine our present state of being and work backward, looking closely at the sources of our very desire for a cure. We must, therefore, start with what we are and why we are searching.

The Structure of Ego: The Five Skandhas

Buddhist psychology works with the psychological awareness of the space between the perceiver and the perceived. It is the distortion of this space by various types of ego fixation which leads to neurotic patterns of perception of the external world and thence to neurotic behavior which is more or less dysfunctional. In order to understand what is meant by psychological space and its neurotic distortions, it is worthwhile looking at the structure of ego according to Buddhist psychology. Ego is seen as a kind of filter network through which energy is constantly being channeled and manipulated rather than being able to flow freely in unrestricted space. It is not a solid entity but a moment-to-moment process of birth, evolution, and death. In Buddhist terminology, this evolutionary process of the ego is divided into five stages known as the five skandhas.

1. *Form*

Psychologically, the background from which ego arises is a basic feeling of spaciousness which contains energy and is not limited by any bound-

aries. There is a sense of being able to move around, of an open gap. It appears as a question which already contains the answer. This openness is basic intelligence, boundless and unlimited by ego. On the most profound level, it questions the very existence of ego, but openness and the sense of insecurity and doubt which goes with it should be said to be the mark of intelligence on any level. However, while openness is intelligence, it is also confusion. We recognize that there is doubt and insecurity, and panic arises. Maybe there is no answer to our problem. At this point we freeze, trying to make something solid and definite. We refuse to make any further move or even to bother with the question anymore. Having established ourselves on solid and familiar ground as a definite and well-known "I," we now solidify our immediate environment as well and cultivate a sense of familiarity toward that. It is very self-satisfying, yet flat and uninspired.

2. *Feeling*

This solidification of ourselves and our environment is the fundamental distortion of perceptual space. However, it is at a very primitive level. There is still a large area of insecurity and the ego has to develop further structures in order to control these areas. At the next stage, there is tremendous pride at having thoroughly established ourselves and our basic territory. But it is a shaky, adolescent pride. It feels fundamentally poor and weak. It therefore sends out tentacles of numbness, not really wanting to feel the situation it is in. Out of its sense of poverty, it also grasps whatever seems to feed it and repels whatever seems to attack it. The entire psychological space, rather than being perceived equally in all directions, is seen purely in terms of its friendly or hostile qualities; there is a bloated feeling of the richness of these qualities.

3. *Perception-Impulse*

Feeling the situation in terms of friendly or hostile is not quite enough. A more definite sense of the center is needed. Self-consciousness develops and everything is perceived in relation to the center. We validate the basic feeling through criteria—everything is perceived as big or small, negative or positive, in relation to "me." The sense of the poverty of the center leads to an emphasis on surface qualities and a constant attempt

to magnetize whatever is perceived as potentially nourishing. Neutral space takes on the qualities of potential pleasure; every corner holds a promise. Creative energy is constantly being diverted to feed our sense of ourselves.

4. *Intellect*

At this stage, the need to control our overwhelming hopes and wants brings in the intellect. A sense of power begins to develop because we can name our feelings and thereby manipulate them. At the same time, naming brings the possibility of comparison. We need to get to the top, comparatively speaking, so that there will be no one above us with whom we can be compared unfavorably. A competitive spirit develops which creates tremendous psychological speed in an attempt to cover all possibilities of attack. There is a highly efficient awareness of the tiny details, which gives the sense of complete control of the situation. At the same time, the lack of any wider view gives the sense of a tremendous need to get above these details. The feeling of openness at this point closes down to a totally narrow view in terms of up or down, higher or lower.

5. *Consciousness*

The final stage of ego is known as consciousness. It is the limited form of consciousness whose function is purely to preserve the facade of ego. It has a sharp, aggressive quality to penetrate to even the smallest crack in this facade. It is the circulatory system of ego which links together all the fragments into a logical whole, which must be invincible, since any failure would be a weakening of the defense. It is therefore prepared to argue endlessly its own point of view and to give meaning to every perception in accordance with its own system. This need to give its own meaning to everything leads the ego to fragment space and therefore to feel a tremendous need to make new connections.

Consciousness solidifies ego's belief in the separateness of self and projections. This quality of separation could be seen as a wall. The wall is, of course, illusory. The problem is that we don't see that, but we believe the wall is real and begin to react to our own projections. The direction of the reaction always seems to be toward the survival of the

personal ego or the solidification of the wall of ignorance from imaginary to real. As the wall becomes more solid, we begin to feel imprisoned by it because there is no possibility of ventilation. The air within the prison of our ego becomes very stuffy. It is too much our own and has lost the freshness of the original open dance. It becomes extremely painful just being ourselves. We begin to struggle to break out of the scheme we have created, but in doing so only further entrap ourselves.

This whole problem develops out of our forgetting the fact that we made the wall in the first place. While the wall seems solid, it is never totally so because we simply cannot maintain the wall at all times. There are always gaps in it. If we could give up the struggle and look plainly at the wall, we could see its gaps, allowing us an appreciation of the open quality of the actual situation. There is joy in the energy of the wall itself.

The Five Buddha Families

This joy is seeing the spaciousness of energy. To understand this, we must first describe energy in more detail. Energy falls into five general patterns called buddha families. Various combinations of these families constitute all of existence. Each family is a particular form of the primordial intelligence that is the basis for confusion that can be transformed into wisdom. We can find examples of these energies everywhere. They are associated with colors, elements, landscapes, seasons, and personality types. Each personality type has a sane and a neurotic way of manifesting. The neurotic manifestation is connected with the distortion of space, which we discussed in the description of the five skandhas. The buddha families are named buddha, ratna, padma, karma, and vajra.

1. *Buddha*

Buddha family is associated with the elements of basic space, the ground which sustains all things. The symbol of the family is the wheel. It is self-contained, not motivated to relate with things outside itself. It is limited space considering itself to be ultimate. But there are gaps in this smug situation just as there are gaps in the ego. Ignoring these gaps is similar to ignoring the gaps in the ego, which is the basis for the first skandha. This quality of ignorance in the buddha family is the basis for the

confused aspect of the other four families, just as the ignorance of the first skandha pervades the last four.

There is inherent in this situation the flicker of doubt that can activate the intelligence in the buddha family by sensing the gaps and realizing the transparency of the limited viewpoint. Thus there can be a sense of existence but with an attitude of spaciousness rather than selfishness. This is the wisdom of the Buddha, which is the basis for the realization of wisdom in all the other families. It is called the wisdom of all-encompassing space.

2. *Ratna*

Padma and ratna families are associated with passion or the idea of attraction. Ratna is the sense of indulging yourself in those attractions. The symbol for ratna is the jewel. Ratna is associated with the element earth and a sense of solidity. This is not only physical solidity but a quality of peace. Whatever happens to earth, it remains basically the same. Whatever ratna indulges in is accepted equally without any idea of rejection. It is very generous and secure. But when the element of ignorance is present, there is the sense of *feeling* secure rather than *being* secure. This leads to pride in that security, but because of this pride there is a feeling that the security is not complete. Whatever one has, one needs more. This is the confused aspect of ratna, which is pride. Without the element of striving to become secure, this energy is transmuted into the wisdom of equanimity. There is the original security but no fear of its loss. Everything is open and free. Ratna relates to the second skandha, feeling.

3. *Padma*

Padma is associated with the element fire. The symbol is the lotus. It has a very seductive quality which draws things to itself. When the quality of ignorance is present, the state of *being* united is ignored, and there is a striving toward *becoming* united. In this way, passion is self-defeating. When the energy of padma is transmuted, striving is unnecessary because there is appreciation of the existence of union. This realization is the appreciation of individuality rather than its loss and is thus the working ground for real communication. This occurs through the precise seeing of "this" and "that" without the purpose of self-maintenance.

Thus the transmuted energy of padma is called the wisdom of discriminating awareness. The padma family corresponds to the third skandha, perception-impulse.

4. Karma

Karma family is associated with aggression. In this case, there is not only knowing clearly, but also a desire to execute that knowledge. The symbol for karma is the sword.

Karma is associated with the element wind. Wind has the quality of naturally being active, blowing, and always only in one direction at a time. But when this natural quality is ignored, then effort seems to be required in the blowing. Once there is effort in action, there always seems to be more to do. A person not only seems unable to accomplish all he wants, but others are found to accomplish more. Thus envy develops, and in its full state, the confused aspect of karma is a sense of extreme paranoia that one will never be able to act in any way.

In the transmuted aspect of karma, there is a sense of action, but no paranoia about its accomplishment. Thus the action is like wind, which naturally blows and touches everything in its path. It always takes the appropriate course. This is the wisdom of all-accomplishing action. Karma is associated with the fourth skandha, concept.

5. Vajra

Vajra is also associated with aggression. This is a type of aggression that holds things at a distance or repels them. The result of this is freedom from emotional involvement, allowing nothing to interfere with the appraisal of the situation. Everything is seen very clearly and precisely. The symbol is the thunderbolt or scepter. Vajra is associated with the element water. Water is clear and impartial. It relates fully with the texture of a situation. But if the seeing is ignored, and there is a striving to see, then water can become turbulent, rushing currents. This confused aspect of vajra is anger. The transmuted energy is like the clear, luminous nature of water. This is called mirrorlike wisdom. Vajra corresponds to the fifth skandha, consciousness.

The five neurotic manifestations of the five buddha families relate to the three psychosomatic diseases of Tibetan medicine: the diseases of

passion, aggression, and ignorance. The Buddha neurosis is associated with ignorance disease which, in a way, is the basic problem or source of the other four styles of neurosis. Ignorance disease affects the internal organs, glands, and nervous system on the physical level. Padma and ratna are associated with passion disease and psychologically with the activity of seduction. There are physical symptoms of insomnia, dizziness, and circulatory problems. Vajra and karma are associated with aggression disease, which may produce symptoms of nervousness, ringing in the ears, kidney problems, lack of appetite, headaches, or general body aches.

Space Therapy

Each of these neurotic styles presents a different way of relating to space, which influences how one relates to a situation. The object of the space therapy we have developed is to increase the energy of a person's neurosis by having a patient lie in a posture particular to his diagnosed neurotic style. The patient is asked to lie in this posture in a room designed to reflect the traits of the buddha family involved. For example, a person with a vajra neurosis is asked to lie in the vajra posture in a vajra room. The patient must remain in the room for two forty-five-minute periods each day, with a short break between periods, together with one of the staff. The result is an increase of energy which makes the neurosis more direct and easier to work with.

For example, the style of a vajra person in his relationship to space is that he wants to see everything, take in all the details. In the vajra posture, the patient lies on his stomach on the floor with the legs together and arms out at right angles to the body, palms pressed against the floor slightly, and the head turned to the side. The position tends to precipitate the basic vajra neurosis because the patient is down on the ground and his vision is very limited. The desire to be in touch with everything visually is denied by this particular physical situation. Everything you would like to see is behind you or above you where you cannot see it. The tendency of a vajra type to fragment space is accentuated by placing many small windows randomly in the room. At first this situation might seem extremely irritating or threatening to the patient, precisely because he feels threatened by his own style of relating to space.

The difference between a person whose neurosis has caused him to become dysfunctional and an ordinary person who may be neurotic but still functional is exactly this threatening quality of his own style. As the therapy continues, the patient's relationship to space in the therapy room becomes less threatening; he can become familiar with it. This corresponds to a change in attitude to his neurosis. Thus the goal of space therapy is not a cure in the sense of a change from a preconceived notion of "unhealthy" to one of "healthy" but rather for the patient to see even his own style as workable, just as it is.

The Maitri program consists of relating to daily domestic situations in a communal environment and using the technique of space therapy. The communal environment, with a minimal hierarchical structure, cuts through the conventional role-playing of a traditional therapeutic situation. Everyone is equally responsible for the work of the community. The demands of this simple domestic situation provide an organic discipline that cannot easily be evaded. Constant reminders from the community environment and from each community member point out the necessity of mutual responsibility. Along with this sense of discipline, there is an emphasis on friendliness toward oneself. The daily routine of communal living provides a background for relating to neurosis directly, through space therapy.

Although the background of Maitri is Buddhist and the staff members are each involved in meditation practice under my guidance, Maitri is nondoctrinal in the sense that the patient is not expected or encouraged to assume a Buddhist point of view. Nor is he specifically given instruction in Buddhist psychology or the theory of space therapy. In this way, the relation with the postures and rooms is direct, not mediated by any preconceptions. We would like to discourage a dependency on the community. So when he has finished his course of training, the patient is asked to leave as soon as it seems possible for him to make independent decisions concerning his life and to function in a regular environment.

Our situation at Maitri is a unique one and, at this stage, somewhat experimental. In the history of Buddhist countries, there is no record of an equivalent to a Buddhist mental hospital. Though the first hospitals of the world had a Buddhist origin under the reign of King Ashoka in India, they were limited mainly to physical diseases. Perhaps because of the very low incidence of advanced psychosis and schizophrenia in Buddhist countries in the Orient, applications of Buddhist psychology have

been limited to the scholastic study, meditation practice, and other disciplines of Buddhist monasteries. Maitri, then, is a very recent meeting point of Tibetan Buddhism and American clinical psychology.

A great deal of credit should be given here to the late Suzuki Roshi for the inspiration for a Buddhist community working with American neurosis. It was during a meeting I had with him in May 1971, at Zen Center in San Francisco, that he expressed the need he saw for this type of situation. It was a point of immediate agreement between us that we should try to develop a therapeutic community—a joint effort of our two schools of Buddhism. Suzuki Roshi's death in December of 1971 prevented his participation in the actual work of Maitri as it exists now near Elizabethtown, New York, but he retains an important place in Maitri's development.

Relating with Death

I WAS BROUGHT UP to be able to relate with people in terms of death. Since I was about nine or ten years of age, I was constantly confronted with people dying, or just about to die, or already dead. This would take place constantly, something like five or six times a week. In Tibet there is such a living quality of body and of death happening constantly that people in that culture don't find it particularly irritating or difficult. But we in the West find it extremely difficult to relate with experience in terms of death.

It seems necessary that unless a person is in a coma or an uncommunicative situation, he or she should be told they are dying. We should let it be known that that person is actually dying. Husbands or wives may not be willing to take such a step as to tell their spouse they are dying, but if you are a friend or if you are a husband or a wife, this is your greatest opportunity to really communicate your trust. At least someone is not at all playing the game of hypocrisy, trying purely to please them. Such hypocrisy has happened throughout all of life, all the time: saying you're good; you are beautiful; you are thin if you are fat; if you are poor you are okay, you are relatively rich; whatever. But this comes as the ultimate truth. From this point of view, if someone is going to die, tell them. It is really a delightful situation that if someone really cares for you, they are not going to tell you a lie in order purely to please you or to relate with you in a harmless way. You are willing to be a harmful person even if the person is going to react against it. Such fundamental trust is extremely beautiful. And I think we should generalize that principle: if anyone is approaching death, relate with them that they are going

to die, that they are just about to die. And at the same time, telling them so is nothing very much exactly, nothing very much.

You should be able to relate with a person's bodily situation and detect the subtle deterioration in their physical senses: the sense of communication, sense of hearing, sense of physical body, sense of facial expressions—the whole thing is deteriorating. But at the same time, a person with a tremendously powerful will, who is used to putting on a superficial smile, can always put on a smile at the last minute of death, saying, "Okay, I'm fine. I'm okay. I'm absolutely splendid." This person is trying to fight off their old age, trying to fight off their deterioration of the senses. That also could happen.

Just taking the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* in to someone's deathbed and reading it to them doesn't really do very much, except that the dying person knows that you are performing a ceremony of some kind. If you are going to relate with such a text, you should also have an understanding of the whole thing, so you do not just read the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* but you try to speak in conversational terms. Such a conversation would go as such: "You are dying, you are leaving your friends and family. Your appreciated surroundings are no longer going to be there. You are going to be leaving us. But at the same time, there is something which continues in terms of death. There is a continuity. Your positive relationship to your friends and to the teachings continues. So work on that continuity, that basic continuity, which has nothing to do with ego. It is very loose ground, but at the same time there is some ground.

"When you die, you will have all sorts of traumatic experiences in leaving the body. Your old memories are coming back to you as well, in the form of hallucinations. That naturally happens to you when you die. But at the same time, there is our companionship, our friendship, and your basic being. I have been very close to you. Because of that I would not hesitate to tell you that you are going to die. The spiritual friend continues and friendship to the dharma continues as well. If anything happens to you in terms of visions, hallucinations, just relate with the actual happening rather than trying to run away from it. Just actually relate with what happens rather than trying to run away from it. Just do that. Don't try to run away from it. Just relate with what is happening there; just relate with what is happening there. Just relate with that! Keep there! Just relate with that! There is ground. Just relate with that. It

doesn't matter what is happening. Relate with some ground. That is working; you are working your way through."

At the same time that the dying person is supposedly deteriorating in intelligence and consciousness, he or she also develops another dimension of higher consciousness, an environmental feeling. It is exactly the same as a person going back to the womb: this environmental feeling develops. So if you are able to provide basic warmth and a basic sure quality that what you are telling is the truth rather than purely what you have been told to tell this person, that is extremely important. "Just relate with what is. Just relate with me, just relate with this. You are lying on the deathbed and you are dying. You are dying, just relate with this, just relate with what is happening to you. There is some continuity happening."

It seems that in order to bring a person into the state of clear light, you have to have the basic ground to relate with the clear light, which is the solidness of the person. Your friends know that you are going to die, but they are not going to freak out about it. They actually are there, really there, positively there, fully there. And they are telling you that you are going to die. They know that you are going to die, but they are really there. If they are not really there, even if they are telling you that you are going to die, it is very suspicious. That sets off all sorts of chain reactions: something funny seems to be happening behind your back; it seems as though your friends are purely reciting what they've been told, as though they were programmed by a computer. So fully being there is very, very important when a person dies, and just relating with the simple things.

Relating with nowness is extremely powerful, because at this point for the dying person there is some uncertainty between body and mind, how to relate with those two situations. The only language that you could use is based on your speaking out of your own body: you're using your mouth, tongue, teeth, and breath to speak to the person. You are communicating on that level to the other person, who is also living in that situation of body and brain and breath—which is deteriorating at that point. But you are relating with that situation. It seems that is the very important point: providing some solid ground, basic ground.

It seems that actually relating with the dying person is very important, to provide the whole ground of dying. Death is no longer a myth

at that point. It is actually happening: "You are dying. We are watching you dying. But we are your friends, therefore we watch your dying. We believe in your rugged quality of leaving your body and turning into a corpse. That is beautiful. That's the finest and best example of friendship that you could demonstrate to us: that you know that you are dying and we know that you are going to die. That's really beautiful. We are really meeting together properly and beautifully, exactly at the point. It is fantastic communication." That in itself is such a beautiful and rich quality of communication that it really presents a tremendous further inspiration as far as the dying person is concerned.

The point is to relate to people and to develop transmission or the meeting of the two minds. This happens between conversations, within the gaps: "This has nothing to do with your death, but let's be together. Let's open ourselves to each other simultaneously.

"Shall we do it? Let's do it. Here we go. Let's open our selves. That's beautiful, let's do it again."

At the same time, it is good to try to save people from unnecessary troubles. If a person goes along with it, you could talk about their relationships to their parents and relatives. You see, there is a tendency when a person leaves his or her body to begin to think about their unsaid things: "I wish I could relate this to someone; I wish I could relate that to somebody." There is tremendous regret going on. It is as though somebody is on a long voyage into a foreign country: "I wish I could tell this to somebody, so and so. Would you like to hear it? Would you like to see that?" On our long voyages, we can write letters, we can send telegrams, we can talk on the telephone; but unfortunately, the dying person has none of those relationships or means of communication. Therefore, it is quite likely that such a person is involved with a very depressed and paranoid situation. They would like to relate with people, to actually relate their experiences—their relationship to their family life or their particular concerns. So try to talk to them as well about their family relationships, their friends, what they would like to be. That actually should be discussed: "I would like to become a Ph.D., to get my doctorate in such and such a topic." "You wanted to do that, but you can't do that anymore because you are dying. Okay. You wanted to do that, didn't you? But that is past. Now you are dying." A person has to be really brave to communicate in that way. In any kind of situation like that, you should always talk about the ambitions of the person, which

are very much a hindrance. Ambitions of any kind are the greatest hindrance to the person. It is as though they would ultimately like to relate to people, but they can't. There is the tremendous claustrophobia of being completely cut off. So it is very important to relate to that directly.

Maybe if you've known that person for a long time, you could also bring up a conversation of what you did together in the past: "Do you remember when we first met that you ran into my car? We met together that time and decided to talk about our insurance policies and we got into this whole thing about meditation and Buddhism? That was beautiful. And now we are here." Anything like that would be extremely helpful. In other words, the whole point is to present a very sane and solid personal situation to the person who is going to die, to relate directly and thoroughly as much as possible. That seems to be the whole point. Any questions?

Student: I can imagine a person dying whose body may have a lot of troubles. With their remaining strength they may just want to be quiet and close their eyes and keep their body quiet and relaxed. In that case, a person talking to them at that time, constantly demanding their attention, would be really a terrible drag. They wouldn't even have the strength to tell the person to be quiet, you know what I mean? [*Laughter*] I'm serious.

Vidyadhara: Just be there, sit there. At least tell them that they are going to die. With a lot of people it actually happens that when their fundamental energy begins to run down, they can draw on their reserve energy, or their capital energy. At that point, they become very awake: they begin to talk, even to sit up. It happens quite a lot, you know. Then there is a chance to relate with them.

S: What should be tried if one is trying to communicate with the dying person in the way you have suggested? What quality of perceptiveness should one be looking for?

V: Well, that perceptiveness should be of the whole environment. It is exactly the same as a person giving an interview on meditation. You have some kind of feeling of the environment of the whole situation. If you are pushing too hard, that means you are being insensitive; if you are pushing too little, that means you are being extremely feeble and not energetic enough to apply your confidence in the person. Such perceptiveness purely depends on a person's state of being. There is really no

guidance for that at all. It has to be exactly based on your abilities, your sensitivity. It is not so much how wise or perfect you are, but how much the situation demands of you. If you accept that situation, then you're going to come out as you should. That is very, very important.

S: Rinpoche, what if you're very emotionally involved with the person and you're very disturbed about them dying. You may resent their dying, or be terrified that they're dying, or have total double feelings about their dying—all sorts of very vivid emotions. And as you're trying to communicate all this to them very directly, you're also letting them know how you feel. I mean you're giving up a certain amount of control in a way by staying in the situation—to them and to yourself. When you let them know how you feel, aren't you laying a powerful trip on them?

V: That does not cause any problems, particularly. There is room for them to be upset—always. That is a very important thing to know. There is room to communicate; there is room for you to get upset. That is extremely important to know, for then you feel there is room for everything, and the whole thing is very, very open. So you don't have to be perfect at all. There is room for everything. That's why you have been communicating with the person: "You are going to die; we are upset because you are going to die; we are going to lose you; blah, blah, blah, and so on and so on. But nevertheless, this is the case." You should try to do that. You could cry, you know, anything! That is beautiful! There is always room. [*Laughs*]

S: How would you like your students to relate to your death?

V: Have a good party. [*Laughter*]

S: Rinpoche, if one goes to a dying person and the person's already dead, is there anything to do?

V: I think so, in the sense that you have to be really there with the presence of that person. You see, the whole point is that you are really talking to yourself when you accept the dying person. It is really you telling yourself. If you regard the whole thing in that way, then your stability is part of that person. You're appearing to yourself in a very stable way, so automatically you feel stable. And if there is a freaked-out person in the bardo state, you are also going to talk to that.

S: Are there any problems with space and time?

V: There is no distance: somebody in Japan could be somebody in America.

S: Should this be done verbally, or should it be done symbolically?

V: It depends on how sure you are of yourself. It is very ordinary, very literal. It depends on how much you trust yourself.

S: What if you come across the victims of an accident or something, and you did not know any first aid, or whether they were going to die or not?

V: Well, anybody studying the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* should have some knowledge of first aid. That's very important.

S: I think that death is very simple, that dying is a very simple situation.

V: There's nothing wrong with that. But generally, I must say that people in America, or people in the West altogether, are very immature and underdeveloped in terms of death. The whole thing is very concealed from them. It's quite different from the American Indians, for instance. You can imagine being born as an American Indian and shooting game and sporting and killing and having bloody things happening constantly. Americans, or Westerners in general, are completely out of that range. They watch movies, which is not quite a natural situation at all. They regard death as purely fictional, like movies. And they are very limited in terms of actually seeing blood. That is one of the very biggest problems they have. They are bewildered by blood. It is a big thing to see a dead body or a corpse lying around. Our world has become too genteel, trying to seal off any of the real negative quality of death at all. There are not even any butcher shops in this country. Everything's packaged with cellophane over it. There's no chopping, no sawing, no meat hanging up. That is not quite enough to be a human being, not enough to be a living person on this earth. They don't have enough raw and rugged qualities, which causes a lot of paranoia. In death as well—whenever there is blood or saliva coming out of the dying person, there are always tissues to wipe it off. The whole thing is completely cared for. Everything is white: the red and black and green sight of bodies is concealed by white constantly, which is extremely sad.

S: Rinpoche, if we're dealing with friends who are not Buddhists, then how do we relate?

V: Well, it's just a question of their dying and your relating with them. You can relate with basic understanding—I mean, don't try to convert them on their deathbed. [*Laughter*] There's no point in that at all. Just tell them what's happening; that's why we are here. Be solid and

continuous. Everything is real: your dying is real and your sickness is real and your pulse is real.

S: Say you know someone's dying and it goes on for several months—is there any preparation that is useful?

V: I think so, yes. As much as you can, get through to the person that it's a living situation that happens: "You are not only going to die into the loneliness, but you are continuing in some sense." I think that quality is very important here.

S: What about the person who dies without believing in anything; what happens to them.

V: They go through the same experiences; it doesn't have to be religious. They go through the same human situation anyway.

S: Does it matter what happens to the body at all?

V: Not in a bodhisattva sense; your body could be donated to the hospital. In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* sense, it matters whether your body is burned or buried or put into the water. Personally, I will be cremated, myself.

S: Does the presence of children interfere with the death process of their parents? In Japan it is said to do so, due to the parents' attachment to their children.

V: I don't think so at all. I don't think so at all. It would be really helpful for them to see the passage of life, which they are supposed to see when they are born.

Theism and Nontheism

As far as I can see, there is no difference between theism and nontheism, basically speaking. Declaring an involvement with any kind of "ism" turns out to be a matter of self and other. In fact, the whole question of self and other can then become very important. But if you really pursue any spiritual path, you will discover, surprisingly, that self and other are one thing. Self is other, other is self.

Spirituality is simply a means of arousing one's spirit, of developing a kind of spiritedness. Through that you begin to have greater contact with reality. You are not afraid of discovering what reality is all about, and you are willing to explore your individual energy. You actually choose to work with the essence of your existence, which could be called genuineness. An interest in spirituality doesn't mean that you lack something, or that you have developed a black hole in your existence which you are trying to compensate for or cover over with some sort of religious patchwork. It simply means that you are capable of dealing with reality.

Whether you worship someone else or you worship yourself, it is the same thing. Both theism and nontheism can be problematic if you are not involving yourself personally and fully. You may think you are becoming spiritual, but instead you could just be trying to camouflage yourself behind a religious framework—and still you will be more visible than you think.

Usually we say that in theistic traditions you worship an external agent, and in nontheistic traditions you do not worship an external agent. Nonetheless, in either case you might just be looking for your version of a baby-sitter. Whether you hire a baby-sitter from the outside

world or from within your own family doesn't really matter. In either case your state of being isn't being expressed properly, thoroughly, because you are trying to use some kind of substitute. We are not trying here to sort out which tradition, or which particular type of merchandise, is better. We are talking in terms of needing to develop a personal connection with one's body and one's mind. That is why the contemplative traditions of both East and West are very important.

Natural Dharma

TO BEGIN WITH, the main point of meditation is that we need to get to know ourselves: our minds, our behavior, our being. You see, we think we know ourselves, but actually we don't. There are all sorts of undiscovered areas of our thoughts and actions. What we find in ourselves might be quite astounding.

Meditation often means "to meditate on" something, but in this case I am referring to a state of meditation without any contents. In order to experience this state of being, it is necessary to practice what is known as "mindfulness." You simply pay attention to your breath, as you breathe in and out, and to every detail in your mind, whether it is a thought pattern of aggression, passion, or ignorance, or just insignificant mental chatter. Mindfulness also means paying attention to the details of every action, for example, to the way you extend your hand to reach for a glass. You see yourself lifting it, touching it to your lips, and then drinking the water. [*Rinpoche takes a sip from his glass.*] So every detail is looked at precisely—which doesn't make you self-conscious, particularly, but it may give you quite a shock; it may be quite real. When mindfulness begins to grow and expand, you become more aware of the environment around you, of something more than just body and mind alone. And then, at some point, mindfulness and awareness are joined together, which becomes one open eye, one big precision. At that point, a person becomes much less crude. Because you have been paying attention to your thoughts and actions, you become more refined.

Out of that precision and refinement comes gentleness. You are not just paying attention, but you are also aware of your own pain and pleasure, and you develop sympathy and friendship for yourself. From that

you are able to understand, or at least see, the pain and suffering of others, and you begin to develop a tremendous sense of sympathy for others. At the same time, such sympathy also helps the mindfulness-awareness process develop further. Basically, you become a gentle person. You begin to realize that you are good: totally good and totally wholesome. You have a sense of trust in yourself and in the world. There is something to grip on to, and the quality of path or journey emerges out of that. You feel you want to do something for others and something for yourself. There is a sense of universal kindness, goodness, and genuineness.

When you experience precision and gentleness, the phenomenal world is no longer seen as an obstacle—or as being particularly helpful, for that matter. It is seen and appreciated as it is. At this point, you are able to transmute the various defilements of passion, aggression, and ignorance into a state of wisdom. For example, when aggression occurs, you simply look at the aggression, rather than being carried away by it or acting it out. When you look at the aggression itself, it becomes a mirror reflecting back to your face. You realize that the aggression has no object; there is nothing to be aggressive toward. At that point, the aggression itself subsides, but its strength or energy is kept as a positive thing. It becomes wisdom. Here wisdom does not mean the usual notion of being wise. Wisdom is egolessness, or a state of being, simply being. The whole process requires a certain amount of mindfulness and awareness throughout, obviously. But you naturally develop a habit of seeing whatever defilement occurs just as it is, even if it is just for a glimpse. Then you begin to be freed from anxiety, and you begin to achieve a state of mind that need not be cultivated and which cannot be lost. You experience a natural state of delight. It is not that you are always beaming and happy, or that you just stay in a state of mystical ecstasy. You feel other people's suffering. It has been said in the texts that the Buddha's sensitivity to others' pain and suffering, compared to the sensitivity of an ordinary person, is like the difference between having a hair on your eyeball and having a hair on the palm of your hand. So delight in this case means total joy, having a total sense of "isness." Then you are able to help others, you are able to help yourself, and you are able to influence the universe with an all-pervasive sense of isness which neither comes nor goes.

We follow these stages of meditation methodically, with tremendous

diligence and the help of a teacher. When one reaches a state of no-question [*Startled laughter erupts among the audience, as a loud thunderclap occurs nearby*] the natural dharma is proclaimed. [*Rinpoche indicates environment with his fan.*] Therefore one begins to feel, without egotism, that one is the king of the universe. Because you have achieved an understanding of impersonality, you can become a person. It takes a journey. First you have to become nothing, and then you can become somebody. One begins to develop tremendous conviction and doubtlessness, without pretense. This stage is called enlightenment, or wakefulness in the ultimate sense. From the beginning, wakefulness has been cultivated through mindfulness, awareness, and sympathy toward oneself and others. Finally one reaches the state where there is no question whatsoever. One becomes part of the universe. [*More loud thunder, accompanied by tumultuous rain.*]

I think that is probably enough at this point. There are various details and technicalities regarding the types and stages of meditation, but since time is short, and also since it would be futile to talk about this and that too much. I would like to stop here. Thank you.

Noble Heart

IN THE VAJRAYANA Buddhist tradition, we talk about how we can discover wisdom behind our passions and delusions. If you simply cut out your passion or your desire, you can't work with the world of non-compassion. It would be equivalent to going through surgery and removing your eyeballs, tongue, heart, and sexual organs. Some people might think that is the way to become a monk or nun, but I'm afraid such an approach doesn't quite work. Compassion is not so much a matter of removing the organs of passion, aggression, and delusion; compassion means working with what you have. If you are hungry, you need your tongue and teeth to eat with. It is a natural thing. We don't punish ourselves because we have a tongue and teeth. Instead, we work with them. When we have a problem, we don't throw it away as if it were a piece of garbage. We pick it up and work with it. Then we find that we have a working basis.

According to the Buddhist teachings, the practice of sitting meditation is a way to work with what we have. Meditation is very practical: we learn how to wash the dishes, how to iron our clothes, how to be. That is compassion. When we know how to be, we don't create chaos for ourselves, to begin with, and subsequently we don't create chaos for others. As it is said in Christianity, "Charity begins at home." Perhaps we could also say, "Compassion begins at home."

Basic virtue comes from learning how to be. If we have no idea of how to be, then we commit sin and crimes of all kinds. When we know how to be, our hearts are softened, and compassion naturally comes along with that. We learn how to cry, how to smile, and how to experience other people's wounds. We also begin to appreciate joy and plea-

sure. Perhaps we haven't ever really explored pain and pleasure in our whole lives. When our hearts are softened and we feel pain, it is excruciating. And when we experience pleasure, it is wonderful. Compassion means exploring pain and pleasure properly, thoroughly, completely. The Sanskrit word for compassion is *karuna,* which means "noble heart." It is not just a matter of feeling sorry for someone: when we experience noble heart, we are able to have a good time, and we are able to identify with others' pain and pleasure.

We need to learn how to be decent human beings. That is the basis for what we call "religion." A decent human society brings about spirituality. It brings about blessings and what could be called the gift of God. This is an extremely simple-minded approach. I'm sorry if I disappoint you, but it is as simple as that. We have to be just as we are. This is not necessarily a Buddhist message; for that matter, it is not even a particularly spiritual message. Compassion is simply a matter of experiencing reality properly.

Obedience

It seems that the main point of having a teacher is that we need to develop a sense of humbleness. Usually we hold on to our egotism as a way of displaying our strength, beauty, knowledge, or wealth. Such egotism is a kind of blockage: we don't hear other people's messages, and we become deaf and dumb. We only hear and see what we want to, rather than opening ourselves. On the spiritual journey, it is important to overcome this deaf and dumb quality. We need to develop a connection with the world, the world other than ourselves. Therefore, devotion is very important.

When I was a child I used to think I was an important person, a specially chosen lama. That particular blockage was slowly and thoroughly broken down by my teacher. Sometimes he criticized me, and sometimes he joked with me. Humor is actually one of the most powerful aspects of such a relationship. I think whether we are in a Christian, Buddhist, or Hindu tradition, it is necessary for us to have a spiritual teacher we can talk to, someone who will relate to us directly. Otherwise there is no chance of a real journey taking place. Sometimes you might feel great love for him or her. Nonetheless, such a relationship based on devotion is always important.

Devotion to a spiritual teacher is different from relating to your college professor. You are not simply trying to snatch for yourself whatever he or she knows, with the hope that you will become better than your teacher someday. In this case, you become continually more humble. The teacher represents the whole lineage of spiritual teachers of whichever tradition you belong to. Once you begin to be devoted to such a

teacher, a sense of grace or blessings descends on you, so that you become softer and softer. You become a more decent person. In fact, you become much happier, because you don't have to hold on to yourself so tightly. There is less strain involved, and you can afford to relax. Then you begin to grow beautiful flowers of wisdom in your heart.

Comparing the Heart

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN FATHER THOMAS KEATING AND CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

Father Thomas Keating: I felt so very much at home in your remark this afternoon, Rinpoche, where you said that the contemplative path, in whatever tradition, is a kind of hidden treasure. And that this treasure has great potential in terms of furthering peace and harmony in the world today. Spiritual awareness is what seems to be missing in our emerging global society. We see interaction on every level: travel, communication, science, education. But the spiritual dimension is missing. So I feel that it is important for the religious traditions to identify and articulate their common understanding of the ultimate or transpersonal experience. Society desperately needs to rediscover values beyond the argumentations of reason. And if the religions themselves are always arguing about doctrinal differences, the deeper message, which is so healing and so fundamental, is never able to come through.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. That is what *catholic* means.

Fr. Thomas: Universal.

Rinpoche: Universal, yes.

Fr. Thomas: So many people are hungering for this hidden treasure that we must make every effort to make it known. Even making it known to each other, as you and I are doing now, is a contribution.

Rinpoche: Yes.

Fr. Thomas: I'm sure it has made you, as a Buddhist on the contemplative path, feel a certain joy to find others in various traditions who share something of your own experience of the ultimate. Thomas Merton

spoke of his delight at meeting people in Asia whom he immediately felt to be long-lost or long-sought friends on the path.

Rinpoche: Yes. I think it is important to practice the disciplines of the particular traditions properly. I have witnessed some churches trying to be more modern by playing jazz on Sunday for their youth group. That kind of social activity becomes their focus. They interject a little spirituality, but mostly they feel guilty introducing religion. I feel disheartened by that. What I want to see is the actual practice of discipline, whatever that discipline is. In order to have any realization—in order to discover God or enlightenment, or whatever term we might use—discipline is very important. But there is a lot of apology about that, which is unfortunate. For instance, in the Catholic Church, it is being said that there are too many saints, so a lot of them are being removed . . .

Fr. Thomas: Hopefully there will be a few more to take their place! [*Laughter*]

Rinpoche: And the original Latin liturgy has been translated into native languages. But Latin, as I see it, has magic. And so does Greek or Russian.

Fr. Thomas: Those ancient liturgical languages of course have a very great beauty and richness of spiritual teaching. A lot has been lost in the transition between the original languages and the vernacular of today.

Rinpoche: There seems to be a lack of respect for language and elocution in America. In fact, lately I have been reintroducing the English language to my students, so they could speak good English. Then they could speak good dharma, good Buddhism.

Fr. Thomas: Could I ask you, in relation to this topic of good language and discipline, whether you feel the value of silence—the capacity to listen, to be open to the teacher—is not also important. In Latin, the word *to obey* literally means "to listen deeply." By listening in this way, one can respond from the depth of hearing, and one's whole being becomes a gift to the teaching or the teacher, as the case may be.

Rinpoche: What is the word in Latin?

Fr. Thomas: Obaudire is the term that became *obedience* in English. It means "to listen thoroughly or deeply."

Rinpoche: That seems to be the same as *ka* in Tibetan. Our lineage is called Kagyü. *Ka* means "command or "to listen deeply" or "to take something into your heart." And *gyu* means "the lineage of those who listen."

Fr. Thomas: That's wonderful because, in the Trappist tradition from which I come, silence is the value that is given predominance. A strict rule of silence was honored when I first entered the monastery. Since then it has been mitigated to some degree, but it is still one of the primary disciplines in our tradition. It provides the context in which to meditate. You come to the meditation, or to the contemplative practice, already prepared by the atmosphere of silence and peace. And then you go out of the silence and try to express that peace in relationships in the community. I noticed that in this community, you emphasize hospitality very strongly. I have never been treated so well! It makes the heart feel warm. This is what we understand, too, by Christian charity, but I have never seen it done so well. I really have a heartfelt admiration for that spirit of gratitude and openness in the community here. It seems to be the fruit of good practice.

Rinpoche: Generosity is very important in Buddhism. In Sanskrit there is a word, *dana,* which at its Indo-European root is related to "donation." Dana is generosity, or giving in. Dana is also connected with devotion and the appreciation of sacredness. Sacredness is not purely a religious concept alone, but it is an expression of general openness—how to be open, how to kiss somebody, how to express the emotion of giving. You are giving yourself, not just a gift alone. So real generosity comes from developing a general sense of kindness. We have to understand the real meaning of a voluntary gift; it is that you are able to give without expecting anything in return. Usually when you give something you expect some reward. But in this case, you don't expect anything. This is expressed in the meditation posture. When you sit in meditation, you open your arms, your front. You just open. So you are not conducting your religious practice in a business fashion. I think that attitude has a lot to contribute to the Western world. Some people think that God should give them something because they did something good for God.

Fr. Keating: Yes, there is a certain amount of that, unfortunately. People might think that if the reward isn't forthcoming, something must be wrong, and they give up the whole thing. But that disposition of devotion which you just described is exactly what is meant by true charity in the Christian sense; it is not self-seeking, but self-giving. Isn't it also true, in Buddhist meditation practices, that the habit of expressing one's dedication, or resolution to continue the practice, and to submit to its growing pains and to the direction of the guru or the master is important? Is

not dedication another quality that is almost as essential as devotion in order to keep on the path? It seems to me to be like the two banks of a river, which enable the energy—both the spiritual energy and the energy of the emerging psychological unconscious—to flow through. Without these two banks one would be swept away. And the practice of devotion and dedication enables one to have a stable or skillful means to direct those energies to efforts that are constructive, such as to use them in service to others and to further the development of one's consciousness.

Rinpoche: Yes. That is also connected to the idea of giving up one's ego, one's egomania.

Fr. Thomas: Could you define the word *ego*? I also like to use this term, but I know that it has a precise psychological meaning which is not the same as the way you or I might use it, in the context of meditation. For the psychologist, the ego is an entity. One's self-consciousness is crystallized into a kind of identity or individuality which separates us from other people. Egolessness is a very difficult concept; it is not really understood by modern psychology. Exactly how would you define *ego,* as it is discussed in Buddhist meditation?

Rinpoche: I think basically it is that which produces aggression, passion, and ignorance. And ego is not regarded as the devil's work, particularly. Ego can be transformed into wakefulness—into compassion and gentleness. But ego is that which holds to itself unreasonably. In English we say ego-centered, for instance, or egomaniac.

Fr. Thomas: Is there an ego that is uncentered?

Rinpoche: Yes.

Fr. Thomas: And what name would you give to that? Egolessness?

Rinpoche: Egolessness; yes. Or shunyata.

Fr. Thomas: Let me ask this question, then—which may actually be coming from a confusion of terms—but when one has shed this ego-centeredness, with its aggression and selfish self-seeking, there is still an identity left, which may actually be very good. This identity is experienced as self-control, goodness toward others, or even as union with God. And yet, that which is in union with God is still a self, a self-conscious or personal self. So now, is egolessness a further stage of the spiritual journey, a stage in which even a good ego, a transformed ego, ceases to exist? And would this experience be what Zen Buddhists call "no-self"?

Rinpoche: Well, I think now we have reached the key point. Egolessness means that there is no ego—*at all.*

Fr. Thomas: That's what I thought it meant. So I'm glad to have that clarification. This is not at all understood in modern psychology.

Rinpoche: And union with God cannot take place with any form of ego. None whatsoever. In order to be one with God, one has to become formless. Then you will see God, or the God, whatever.

Fr. Thomas: This is the point I was trying to make for Christians by quoting the agonizing words of Christ on the cross, where he asked God, "Why have you forsaken me?" His sense of personal relationship with God, as God's son, seems to have disappeared. Many interpreters say, "Oh well, it was only temporary." But I am inclined to think, in light of the Buddhist experience of no-self, that he was passing into this stage beyond the personal self, however holy and beautiful that self was. So that stage would then have to be defined as the primary Christian experience, too. Christ has called us Christians not just to accept him as savior, but to follow the process which brought him to that final stage of consciousness.

Rinpoche: Well, it could be said that Christ is like sunshine, and God is like the sky, blue sky. In order to experience either one of them, you have to be without the sun first. Then you begin to develop the dawn.

Fr. Thomas: Yes!

Rinpoche: And then you begin to experience sunshine; the sky becomes blue. First you have to have nothingness, nonexistence. It's like jumping out of an airplane. First you experience space, and then your parachute begins to open. You jump out of the airplane, which is gone by then.

Fr. Thomas: Yes. But then out of that nothingness there begins to emerge a new life, which is not one's own, but is without a self and is united with everything else that is.

Rinpoche: That's right.

Fr. Thomas: So that's a similar experience in Buddhism. It is our understanding of Christ in his glory—he is so at one with the ultimate reality that he has completely merged into it. . . .

Rinpoche: In order to be ultimate you have to be a non.

Fr. Thomas: A nun?

Rinpoche: Non. Nonexistent.

Fr. Thomas: Well, that's the *ultimate* of the ultimate.

Rinpoche: Yes. [*Laugher*]

Fr. Thomas: But, how would you articulate—perhaps this can't be communicated except by spiritual communication or interior enlightenment of some kind—but are there any words that point to that ineffable experience where reality is the same in oneself as in everyone else, and where action emerges out of the present moment without reflection—where one sort of knows how one should relate spontaneously, without thinking, to every moment of life?

Rinpoche: That's called ordinary mind. It's not glorious, particularly. It's *so* ordinary.

Fr. Thomas: Couldn't be more ordinary!

Rinpoche: Very ordinary.

Fr. Thomas: Like fanning yourself on a hot day . . . a very sacred, very profound kind of ordinary mind. Very ordinary.

Rinpoche: Almost nothing. Not almost, even. Just so ordinary.

Fr. Thomas: So what is it that changes to bring this about? Reality doesn't change. I suppose it is just that we cease to be a self in the possessive sense of the word. Self-consciousness ceases.

Rinpoche: Everything changes. When you see sunshine, it's a different kind of sunshine.

Fr. Thomas: Are you looking at yourself when you see the sunshine?

Rinpoche: The sunshine is coming to you.

Fr. Thomas: In other words, the sunshine is looking at itself.

Rinpoche: Yes. That's why it is called ordinary mind. And often in Buddhism it is known as "one taste."

Fr. Thomas: Is there not a terrible sense of loneliness—or nothingness—that one has to pass through in order to really taste no-self and then to emerge into this higher unity with all that is? It is as if all reality were manifesting itself in some mysterious way in the most ordinary things of everyday life. In other words, there's no self to look at within. And since there's no self, there's no personal God, no relation to anybody else.

Rinpoche: I think so. I think you said it.

Fr. Thomas: How can you help someone in that state?

Rinpoche: Bring them into ordinary mind.

Fr. Thomas: I imagine that even one's relation to food and drink, beautiful music, and everything else would all of a sudden become the same in that sort of tunnel of experience.

Rinpoche: Absolutely.

Fr. Thomas: So how do you live without a self? What do you do before your life opens out into a new and higher life?

Rinpoche: You just do it. That's what is called "old dog mentality."

Fr. Thomas: Oh! What a beautiful expression. [*Laughs*]

Rinpoche: He just sleeps.

Fr. Thomas: Meaning, he just exists.

Rinpoche: Yes.

Fr. Thomas: A question which I've been contemplating myself lately is, in the state of ordinary mind, would a person suffer anything? Without a self, it seems there is no one to suffer.

Rinpoche: No suffering. Just lots of pleasure. Sometimes the pleasure might be suffering, but you aren't bothered.

Fr. Thomas: If someone, such as Jesus, who was in a state of ordinary mind, went through an excruciating kind of suffering, what would be their response to that experience—to the persecutors, or to that experience—to the persecutors, or to his own physical suffering that might be, humanly speaking, unbearable?

Rinpoche: His reaction would be to see space. There is lots of room, lots of space. Suffering is usually claustrophobic. But in this case, there is no problem, because the person sees space.

Fr. Thomas: For the sake of the bodhisattva ideal, would one relinquish the experience of no-self and return to the experience and sufferings of people who are still in the egoic stage?

Rinpoche: One proclaims; one proclaims constantly. But *you* are not talking.

Fr. Thomas: There's no *you*.

Rinpoche: Yes. It's like an echo. It is often referred to as an illusion.

Fr. Thomas: One final question, Rinpoche. Is it the Buddhist teaching that this state can be reached through the marvelous technology of Buddhist wisdom, or is there a certain point when the self has to be torn out of you by the absolute? In other words, is that tunnel that I spoke of so terrible that one could never go through it of one's own volition, unless one was kind of dragged through it by a power that was greater than oneself?

Rinpoche: It could only come through one's admiration for one's teacher. You have to become one with the teacher and begin to mix your mind with the teacher's mind. Then you begin to dissolve.

Fr. Thomas: And that presupposes that the teacher must have achieved this level to begin with. . . .

Rinpoche: That is what we call lineage.

Fr. Thomas: That's what lineage means! That's wonderful!

Rinpoche, you have provided a lot of clarification, at least for me, personally. Thank you so much.

Rinpoche: Thank you.

Farming

> When the basic nature of sentient beings, like the ground, is accompanied by the moisture of compassion and love, the seed of bodhi mind begins to grow. From this tree spread the thirty-seven branches conducive to enlightenment, and the ripened fruit of perfect buddhahood brings about the happiness and welfare of sentient beings.
>
> —GAMPOPA, *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF BASIC GROUND implies the positive attitude toward the energy and potential to give birth to enlightenment in the nature of sentient beings. The person concerned with this particular ground is the farmer who lives on this plot of land. He is the ambitious farmer who wants to develop his property and he has definite attitudes toward bringing about its enrichment. His style of working with his land may not be particularly the ideal, but it does provide the energy which inspires the farming.

The farmer is unhappy about his situation. In fact, he is thoroughly confused about how to begin; it is uncertain whether he should relate to his dream or whether he should start something more frugal. In this connection nothing seems exciting except his wish to start the actual cultivation, which at this point is more of a hang-up than clear vision. He inevitably faces the problem of deciding whether he should abandon farming altogether or try to follow through with his lifestyle, which is already involved with this arable land. The possibilities of farming are very limited in terms of adventure, but if he is willing to relate with the limited situations which include poverty, then this farmer has no choice but to begin with frugality as a stepping-stone. This is often seen in the urban situation where there is no other possibility but just trying to

speak the same language as the environment, which is the language of limitation, of no inspiration.

From a different angle, the very notion of frugality is purely a relative question, because it is the ambition of becoming a rich person that is the source of poverty. If this particular farmer is willing to accept the naturally occurring requirements of his farming situation, then he doesn't have to question about frugality or extravagance at all. If such a farmer regards his farming as an organic part of his lifestyle, then success or failure becomes unimportant. The farmer has finally made his relationship to his farm. The earth needs a person to relate to; through the interaction of the two, cultivation begins.

At this point the farming is not an easy matter. There is a basic ground—impressionable consciousness—which belongs neither to the good nor the bad, and also there is the commentator who views and watches the situation with the intent of taking advantage of it.

When the inquisitive mind, "the farmer," begins to conduct his games, either he loses his contact with the ground or he manages to establish his relationship with it. The farmer's success depends upon his ability to establish a proper relation to the ground with which he is working. In order to establish this relationship, he has to give up his ambition to become a successful farmer as such. He finds his ground tough, quite possibly imbedded with rocks. Probably there is not enough water, because it would drain between the rocks. It is quite certain that the spot that the farmer has chosen doesn't live up to the expectations generated by his dream.

There is a secret message if you work with the soil with all of your energy. It might work. But this farmer's attitude is something casual—that since he has chosen this area it *should* work; otherwise he might sell this farm and get some other place. But then, if he got some other place to farm, that situation might be the same as the present one.

The continual search for something better cannot work out. Acceptance of the site of your farm is the only way to relate with your particular style—it is the recognition of what is karmically inevitable. This plot could be farmed—it could be cultivated. At the moment of giving up all further dreams and expectations, the possibility opens up that this highland rocky mountain ground could become productive.

We plow with patience, as Milarepa says, but it is patience that is plowing in this case. This tames the ground. We sow a seed—whatever

is healthy—in this ground. Sowing the seed is an easy matter, but fertilizing is a difficult task. Acceptance of the negativity, which started piling up even before plowing and sowing the seed, becomes the manure or fertilizer. Collection of manure takes place right from the surveying of the ground on through the farming process. These negative situations are used to enrich the spiritual path.

The expectation of the farmer has to be an organic one as well. He is not to harvest prematurely, but must allow his crop to ripen properly. The narrow-minded discipline of patience is necessary, but if this becomes merely a way of inflicting pain on your body and your mind by certain contemporary militant methods, it could be regarded as induced labor, as though one could give birth to buddha nature by perching on an egg. The appropriate discipline is to see clearly beyond the temptation to use chemicals or artificial ways to force the seed to grow faster or be "healthier." This is the dignity and simplicity of narrow-mindedness: by the practice of meditation, the right climate for the growth of the seed is provided; there is no way of urging it to speed up.

Since this ground does not have water, we have to water it quite diligently. Water in this case is the compassion of the bodhisattva's path. If the farmer is willing to take interest in the irrigation system, he must be a constant person, willing to relate to every plant, to see that each one is communicated with properly.

Believing in the water of compassion is not quite enough. There must be an attitude of trusting nature to take its own course. And the process might be said to be the shunyata experience of the student-farmer, that he finally accepts the law of nature without security or preconceptions, which are dualistic clingings. The absence of dualistic clinging is simply relating with the organic farming process. If you water the ground and apply the manure properly, the seed does grow. Wanting it to grow fast or slowly is irrelevant. You would simply be trying to apply emotional power over nature. So the point is not to give up emotions as such, but to surrender the mentality of power over others. Power over others expresses the formula of anti-shunyata. Once this student-farmer gives up his hope of personal influence over nature, then a glimpse of shunyata or the freedom of growth of plants takes place.

Currently one hears that plants grow better when certain music is played to them. The farmer may believe that he can make plants respond according to his musical taste. But it seems totally arbitrary—are

chrysanthemums from Japan at a disadvantage because they have never heard Bob Dylan's music?

A person might have the fixation that the world is his own to manage, including the response of chrysanthemums to Bob Dylan's music. That can be seen as the anti-shunyata approach of seeing the reality that you want to believe in. People are so concerned with proving that the message of the primordial world speaks the absolute truth, and they want to possess that truth self-righteously. But there is the possibility that the primordial message isn't the truth, but the primordial lie, which exists before you even thought of lying. In fact, the very concept of ultimate truth is the ultimate lie. So we go racing between ultimate truth and ultimate lie, until we finally don't know who is telling the truth and who is not. The question is not so much who is on the right side or the wrong side, but who instigated the whole game. There's no room for logic in this case. As is said in the *Prajnaparamita-hridaya Sutra,* "Form is emptiness, but emptiness is form. *Therefore,* form is no other than emptiness and emptiness is no other than form." Finally, the questions of what is what, and what is not what, get confused. Quite wisely, it is said in the *Vajracchedika Sutra,* "the only refuge is the awakened, the victorious one, the only Buddha, the dharma body." The community of sangha is the last resort. At this point, the only way to relate to reality is the incantation that there is nothing at all from both subjective and objective points of view which is the PARAGATE mantra—gone beyond completely, without any reference or perspective. So you lose the concept of coming or going, but at the same time, it is certain that ego is losing its ground, and directed relations between this and that become irrelevant.

The farmer's belief that he is cultivating a mystical farm is challenged because he is uncertain whether the growth of this farm is really due to his enrichment of the property or whether the crops and the orchard have just grown naturally.

Yet there is some kind of magic, as is said in the *Heart Sutra.* This is the greatest incantation that could turn the world upside down. It is the farming process of letting things grow. However philosophical you may be, that philosophy is overwhelmed by the fantastic magic show that takes place in the discovery of shunyata and in growing these particular plants. The farmer has to yield to the organic process of nature. Having done that, he must come to believe that his watchful eye has no use. So the farmer has to give up being a farmer and must realize that the "farming project" need never have been undertaken.

Work

SEEING ORDINARY THINGS WITH EXTRAORDINARY INSIGHT

BASICALLY, SPIRITUAL PRACTICE deals with our psychological state of being in daily life situations. The difference between an enlightened and a confused state of mind lies either in knowing the situation as it is, or in not knowing the situation as it is and being confused and frightened by it. What we are concerned with is not a matter of faith born with a revelation of external identity. Rather, it is faith and understanding born out of the precision and clarity of perceiving the universe as it is.

There is a tendency of the materialistic attitude to try to find some dwelling place, some dwelling situation where you can be secure and satisfied. But it seems that spiritually there is no point in entering into a trancelike state of absorption and making the best of that as a home and dwelling place. Spirituality is not based on following set patterns. This disregards spiritual development itself. What's wrong with such a view is that spirituality is regarded as something extraordinary, completely extraordinary, outside daily life, as though you step into another sphere. You step into another realm, as it were, and you feel that that is the only answer. There is nothing more than that.

When you see the ordinary situation with extraordinary insight, it is like discovering a jewel in rubbish. For instance, if work becomes part of your spiritual practice, then it becomes extremely powerful because your regular daily problems cease to be only problems and become a source of inspiration. Nothing is rejected as ordinary and nothing is

accepted as particularly sacred, but all the substance and material available in life situations are used.

So the whole thing is based on conceptualization. If we have the attitude that life is good for us and we are supposed to gain something out of it, then gaining means finding a suitable, comfortable nest to dwell in, enriched by all sorts of environmental elements created for the ego, part of the maintaining of me, myself. Or there can be no concept, no particular aim; you can throw yourself overboard, off the cliff, let go, go along with the situation and let go of the process of learning. People might say this is ludicrous, impractical; they think you are supposed to have self-respect, you are supposed to be a proud person; you should have an aim, an object, a goal in mind. But such people have never approached the problem from the other angle at all, so they have no authority because they haven't actually seen the other side of the coin. They daren't see it; it's too dangerous, too frightening for their egos. In fact, if there is another way of approaching the subject beyond self-respect, beyond pride, that may be the only way you can make friends with yourselves. You don't have to put yourselves into the painful situation of the competitive process at all.

Work is related to ego. Either you like to work frantically, to fill all spaces and not allow any creative process to develop at all, or else there is a kind of laziness, regarding work as something that you should revolt against, which also means being afraid of creativity. Instead of letting the creative process be, instead of letting it develop, you tend automatically to impose the next preconception because there is this fear of seeing the basic origin, which is in a sense a defeat for the ego. Because it is embarrassing to see your basic quality of nakedness, you are afraid to embark on a further creative process as well as being afraid to see the basic space.

The general notion we have is, if you feel the need to work then work, and if you don't feel that you need to work, then stop working and do something else. But if you have this attitude, it means that you don't have the proper kind of feeling of the work itself. Work doesn't necessarily mean earning money and doing a job; rather, it is the creative process of activity.

Let's take the example of filling all spaces. In this case, work comes down to being a way of escape. Whenever a person finds something depressing or is afraid, or the situation of life is not going smoothly, immediately he begins polishing a table, or weeding the garden, trying to

find something to do. It seems that the worker is reacting to the mental state created by ego, because he doesn't seem to have a real communication with the actual work itself, although physically he is actually doing it. He doesn't want to solve the basic problem, but seeks a kind of pleasure of the moment.

In one way, he is living in the now, living in the moment. But this is the wrong way of living in the moment because he doesn't feel that he could cope with analyzing and looking back and learning from the basic problem. He is frightened of the space of any empty corner.

Often you can find an example in the way a house is decorated. Whenever there is an empty wall, you automatically put something else up, another picture or another thing, so the result is that each time there is a feeling of space, you fill it up, you fill up the gap; it becomes completely crowded. And the more it is crowded the more you feel comfortable because you don't have to deal with any vacant area. Or even if you intentionally leave space, the space is solidified into self-conscious decoration. Not only that, but a lot of people when they stop working and are living on an old-age pension, for example, would again like to take a job to occupy themselves. Otherwise they might have to lose their speed, their constant going forward, which is a kind of occupation in itself and very much a neurotic process.

The other case—reacting against taking a job or working—is a blind approach which does not make use of the intelligence. We find that in many cases young people rebel against taking jobs, or working at all for that matter. But that is also refusing to associate with the practicality of life, refusing to associate with the earth itself, which means a great deal. Because of our tremendous basic intelligence we begin to see problems if we embark on a creative process: one kind of work involves the next kind of work and that means continuously working on oneself. You see, the whole point is that whatever we do physically is also associated with our state of mind, and every move that we make on a physical level has spiritual significance, in every sense. This may sound very airy-fairy, but it is so. True spirituality is not a sort of pious and religious thing. It relates with truth, fact, the isness, the actual fact of life. And every situation has bearing on our psychology, the true psychology, the absolute aspect of mind.

So a person could be very, very intelligent in escaping work. He feels too lazy to go into anything, he would rather daydream or think about

something. This presents, I suppose, a kind of anarchistic element. If he does something constructive, practical, then it is connected with society, it is connected with taking care of something, and that seems to be very threatening because he doesn't want to help maintain or defend society. But that seems to be the wrong end of the stick; you are doing the wrong thing. If you try not to help society, materialistic society, by not taking part in work and practicality, you only magnify your own negativity. That way not only are you useless in society, you don't help anything at all. And if you really go on and on into this kind of nonparticipation in society, then the last thing is not eating, not breathing. Because the air that you are breathing also belongs to society and the world as well. So this could go too far.

A person develops a kind of intelligence that protects laziness. Immediately when he doesn't want to do something, there is a kind of answer which automatically comes up. "I don't have time, because . . ." The answer is very convenient and he is very intelligent in catching on to those particular kinds of answers. But this is misuse of knowledge, of intelligence.

The best way of using intelligence is learning when to act practically, when to go and really relate to the earth as directly as possible. It could be working in a garden, in the house, washing dishes, or whatever demands attention. If you don't feel the relationship between earth and yourself, then something is going to turn chaotic.

We are constantly involved in this kind of chaos in dealing with money. In general we very rarely have the feeling of relating directly with the earth when it comes to money matters. Money is basically a very simple thing, but our attitude toward it is overloaded, full of preconceived ideas. These preconceived ideas could be very much a way of developing the pride of ego, the manipulative process of ego. Even the attitude toward the physical bills, just pieces of paper, is a very solemn thing; it's very embarrassing in a way to see this bill. The mere fact of handling money means a very serious game. If you have ever seen someone buying diamonds, for example, there is something very meaningful, very solemn about their way of doing it, a sense of very great importance. And this place where they sell expensive things creates a very awe-inspiring environment.

Somehow it is almost like a child building sand castles and selling tickets to the sand castles. The difference between playing as a child and

playing as an adult is that in the adult's game, money is involved. A child doesn't think in terms of money, but you who have attained adulthood think of this as a solemn, serious game. You would like to charge people to get in to it.

It seems that money makes a tremendous difference in the process of communication and relationships because of our preconceived ideas about it. Suddenly, if a friend refuses to pay for your restaurant bill, automatically a feeling of resentment or separation from your friend arises, and immediately there is a break in your communication. This is all based on your attitude, your preconceived ideas. If you buy someone a cup of tea, it is just hot water and tea and a cup, but somehow there is this added factor of meaningfulness. So for us, money is not just related to a practical earthy situation, but it is the energy principle of our preconceived ideas. Therefore we never seem to feel quite clear about it. There is always an element of confusion, coming from an unbalanced state of mind.

Our balanced state of mind depends on how we do things. It could be something insignificant, like the way we pour tea, but it could mean everything. You can always tell whether a person has the feeling of work, for example, as dealing with the earth, or just as some casual thing or something that he has to do. That also applies to how you deal with life in general. If you don't feel that every step, every situation has some spiritual significance, then your pattern of life becomes full of chaos, full of problems, and you begin to wonder where these problems came from. They make you feel that something's wrong and wants attention. They just spring up out of nowhere, because you refuse to see the subtlety of life. Somehow, you can't cheat, you can't pretend that you can pour a cup of tea beautifully, you can't act it. You have actually to feel it, feel the earth and your relationship to it.

Having started, we must also finish everything in work. It's very interesting to watch the Japanese tea ceremony. It begins with collecting the bowl, the napkin, and teaspoon, and boiling water. Everything is deliberately done, properly done. Tea is served and the guests drink deliberately, with a feeling of dealing with things properly. The important thing is that the ceremony also includes how to clean the bowls, how to put them away, how to finish. Clearing away seems to be as important as starting. But generally when we do something, cook something for example, we collect a lot of things we like and chop them and cook them

with enthusiasm. Then, having chopped, having cooked, having churned out a thing, we leave it. We don't think in terms of how to clear it away.

Clearing away seems to be a problem always in materialistic society. There are endless advertisements about what to buy and how to make things, but they don't say how to clear them away. Therefore we have a problem with disposing of garbage. That seems to be the biggest problem that we have. There is a saying in Tibetan: "Better not to begin; if you want to begin, don't leave a mess behind."

I think it is extremely important to work, as long as you are not using work as an escape or a way of ignoring the basic existence of a problem, particularly if you are interested in spiritual development. Work is one of the most subtle ways of acquiring discipline. You don't need to look down on someone who works in a factory or produces materialistic things. You learn a tremendous amount from such people. I think that many problems about work come from a kind of sophistication of the analytical mind. You don't want to involve yourself physically at all. You want to work purely intellectually or mentally.

This is a spiritual problem. Anyone who is interested in spiritual development thinks in terms of the importance of the mind, that sort of mysterious highest and deepest thing that we have decided to learn about. But strangely enough the transcendental thing, the profound thing, exists in the kitchen sink, in the factory. It may not be particularly blissful to look at; it may not sound as good as the spiritual experiences that we read about, but somehow the actual reality exists there, in the simplicity of people and working with people and dealing with every problem that we are given. Working in this way brings tremendous depth, tremendous experience in dealing with situations, in dealing with things. I think we are lacking the peasant quality, the earthy quality, a sort of tribal quality. If we have this quality of simplicity then, in fact, we won't have any problems in dealing with our minds at all, because everything will work in a very balanced way, everything will be dealt with properly and thoroughly and simply.

Take the example of peasants in India, or American Indians, or Mexicans. They have a tremendous sparkle in their eye, they have a tremendous earthy quality, because they deal with situations with their own hands. They have a tremendous rough and rugged, powerful quality as well. If you look at their faces, it is almost impossible to imagine that they could freak out. Buddha and Christ were of such people. The peo-

ple who wrote the Vedas and the *Dhammapada* and all the scriptures were not intellectual, high-strung people. They lived very simply, they spent a long time with the peasants, the simple people. In order to become completely immersed in skillful action, one has to simplify oneself to the ordinary level, the ordinary earthy level.

If we are able to simplify ourselves to that level, then, of course, we would be able to see the other aspect as well. Then there would be a tremendous difference in the state of mind. The whole pattern of thinking, the internal game that goes on, becomes much less a game; it becomes a very practical way of thinking in situations.

Awareness during the process of working also seems to be very important. It could be the same sort of awareness one has in meditation, the leap of experiencing the openness of space. This is connected very much with feeling the earth and the air together. You can't feel earth unless you feel air. The more you feel the air, the more you feel the earth. That is to say that the feeling of space between you and the objects becomes a natural product of awareness, of openness, peace, and lightness. Automatically you begin to feel this. And the way to practice is not necessarily to concentrate on things or to try and be aware of yourself and try and manage the job at the same time, but to have a general feeling of acknowledging this openness as you are working. You then begin to feel there is more room to do things, more room to work. It is a question of acknowledging the existence of the openness of a continual meditative state. You don't have to try to hold on to it or try to bring it about deliberately, but just acknowledge the vast energy of openness by a fraction-of-a-second flash to it. After acknowledging , then almost deliberately ignore its existence and continue with your work. The feeling of openness continues, and you begin to develop very much the actual feeling of the things that you are working with. The awareness that we talk about is not so much a question of constant awareness as an object of mind, but just becoming one with awareness, becoming one with the open space. This means becoming one with the actual things that you are dealing with as well. So the whole thing becomes very easy and a one-way process rather than one of trying to split into different sections and different degrees of awareness, the watcher and the doer. You begin to have a real relationship with the objects and their beauty as well.

Sex

LIKE ANYTHING ELSE in life, sex is either based on some kind of center or is centerless. That is a very important point. And I am sure that if we know that basic argument, or basic question, the rest could be quite simple.

In connection with sex, our subject tonight, I would like to go over this question of ego again. It's not so much a question of sex, it's more a question of love, I think. The basic setup of ego contains ignorance, refusing to look back to its origin. From that confusion arises fear or panic. After fear and panic, that process continues through perception and impulse and the rest of the five skandhas.

The question is why: why after ignorance should there be perception, should there be impulse? It is because a tremendous, vast store of energy develops from that process. That vast store of energy is not ego's energy at all. It is the energy of the primeval background, which permeates continuously. That primeval background or universal unconscious—whatever you would like to call it—is not just a blank state, a vacant state of nothingness at all. That background also contains tremendously powerful energy. It is completely filled with energy.

If we examine that energy, we see that it has two basic characteristics: heat and direction. That is what makes up the energy. It contains the fire quality of warmth, heat, a consuming quality, as well as the air quality of direction. The spark of energy has a direction to flow, a particular pattern. In this case, the whole process takes that same pattern: whether that pattern goes through the confused form of the filter of ego or not, the same pattern goes on and on all the time. That pattern cannot be destroyed or interrupted at all.

When we talk of this spark of energy, which contains warmth, it is very interesting to see its connection with the practice of yogic heat, or tummo. Tummo is the inner fire described in the six doctrines of Naropa, one of which is the development of inner heat. That energy has a consuming quality, ever-burning like the sun—ever-burning, continuously consuming. It consumes up to the point that it does not allow any room for doubts or manipulations at all. It is such a vast power that it goes on and on and on, without allowing room to manipulate, without allowing room for confusion or ignorance or panic or doubts.

When this heat is filtered through ignorance it becomes, in a very interesting way, instead of pure consuming, slightly stagnated—through the process of ignoring to look at its basic ground. That is, one might say, the basic twist of love. In the case of love in the ordinary way of thinking, there seems to be a basic twist, like anything else in life: that basic twist is refusing to see this vast energy of consummation.

Because of that, the filter of ego has to manage to accommodate this vibrating energy somehow, in some kind of container. What we tend to do is to accommodate it within the confusion, which is a kind of network, a wire net or container. When that particular network of confusion is created, we tend to put that energy into it, and from there, the basic twist starts. In other words, the intelligence of ego is not up to the extent of the power of that burning heat of love, but it *is* up to the point of the distortion of that burning heat—unsuccessfully, of course. So the process of unsuccessfully capturing that energy churns out a partial burning heat of love, a partial burning flame of love.

What this partial burning flame of love manages to churn out is an outward-going process; but in this case, it could be said that this going outward is pure fascination, because the flame hasn't been completely let out, opened, let loose. So it is as if the flame managed to extend out its tongue. That is fascination, when the energy of love is filtered through confusion unsuccessfully. The reason I say unsuccessfully is because it is the ultimate wish of ego to completely control the world's energy, so that everything can be captured, so no flame escapes through the gaps in the network. It is a partial thing; and because it is partial, the flame has to extend and it also has to come back in order to extend further. That is how our ordinary, confused passion works.

Ordinary passion extends out, but because of the network of confusion, it has no capability of extending in a limitless way, so it automati-

cally has to come back. When it automatically comes back, it has already been sort of programmed, readjusted, because of the obstacle of confusion that runs through it. But strangely enough, this love, desire, or passion hasn't been completely captivated by the ego. It is the one emotion that has escaped, that is completely outside the realm of ego—unlike anger, pride, envy, and the other kleshas, or emotions, which *have* been successfully captivated. Passion is a very powerful thing; it is the powerful makeup of the basic origin, so we haven't actually managed to captivate or spoil it 100 percent. So generally, when we reflect ourselves onto external situations, we would like to extend our passion or desire, and then we would like to possess that particular thing. We extend our desire, passion, and we would like to draw something in.

If we do that unsuccessfully, we tend to feel very frustrated; whereas if we *could* possess it, we feel we would have conquered something. It is rather like the analogy of two people who set out and decide to take a walk on the High Street. One person is slowly walking among the shops, admiring the displays in the shop windows. In the other case, also window shopping, he admires them and he wants to get them for himself. He would like to buy but he realizes he hasn't got enough money, so each time he sees something he admires, he feels terribly painful. But he stills does it because he enjoys the first glimpse. And that is the contrast between the two types of seeing: the possessing way of seeing and the admiring way of seeing.

That applies to relationships as well, much more than to objects, because relationships between people are very sophisticated, extremely sophisticated, for the very fact that you have the ability to extend your flame and consume it, and the other person also has the same thing. So that kind of process is very powerful. The whole process of relationship becomes a kind of game, very much so. Particularly when one person would like to possess the other, another person, it becomes very powerful—to the extent that whoever has the most powerful, overwhelming personality, then the other person would be subdued under it.

That is the general way of looking at the situation of possessing somebody else. Whether that possession takes on the very apelike quality that you would like to possess somebody because of their physical beauty, purely because they are handsome or pretty, or because they have particular subtleties in their psychological setup you would like to possess—in both cases, it is an extension of a very apelike quality. In

either case, the relationship of sex is very much an ape quality, driven from the basic structure of ego. You see the other purely as a kind of juicy steak. You would like to gulp it down, and when you are finished, nothing continues except that sort of animal instinct.

But I'm not suggesting that people should be more sophisticated in that particular art, if we have that setup already. The more we try to be sophisticated, the more we make fools of ourselves because everybody knows everybody's tricks. In this case, everybody is a professional, as we know very well. If you try to be subtle, it is rather like the Chinese story of a man trying to steal a bell. A fool wanted to steal this beautiful bell, a very expensive one that made a beautiful noise, a beautiful ringing sound. So he set out to the house to get the bell. He walked very quietly into the house and picked up the bell and he heard a sound. As he picked up the bell very quickly, in a panicking way, he heard a sound. When he heard the sound of the bell, he tried to close his ears with one hand and to grab hold of the bell with the other hand. He kept on saying, "I don't hear it. I don't hear it!" It's very interesting—not only in the case of sex, but in any situation, we play the same kind of game. Although we are quite sure that the other person realizes the game we are playing, we still won't give in; we continue playing it as though we know nothing about it.

The other case, in which relationships are associated with the subtlety of the basic background, takes on the same pattern of passion as in the ordinary sense. Just ordinary. This kind of pure passion doesn't have to be pious passion, if there is such a thing at all, and it doesn't have to be articulated passion. It is just ordinary passion in this case as well, but it is called vajra passion.

In some strange way it is *vajra,* "indestructible nature," because it is wild passion. Because it has no network or wire around it, it is free passion, wild passion, unleashed passion. Such passion has not been directed by the work of some particular switchboard, so it is more powerful. It does not only contain the ape quality. It contains the qualities of spark and light, or the wisdom quality, and it also shows the tremendous energy, or consuming quality, without going through any filters or networks. That kind of passion, whether it is connected with sex or with any desirable subject, is wild passion.

There are two ways of presenting this passion. The first one is very traditional, sort of pious, and very disciplined. It is like the basic discipline

work you find in the old orthodox schools of thought: to acknowledge the existence of this passion, but also to control it. It is interesting that in the beginning, controlling this passion doesn't decrease its intensity at all. In fact, as one learns to live with it more and more, it increases more and more—until you realize the passionlessness quality in which putting passion into action and not putting passion into action are both the same.

You have to achieve that passionless quality before you get to the point of learning to live with the passion; otherwise, you cannot do it. So by acknowledging the existence of this passion, mentally one could develop. But by physically not putting this passion into effect, controlling it by tremendous discipline, this passion could then develop into passionlessness—not because you suppress it, but because you have learned to live with it.

If you try to suppress the passion, this orthodox approach could go wrong. If you try to suppress it, that means you are not acknowledging the existence of such passion anymore at all. Whatever comes up, you suddenly sort of automatically shut down, because you feel guilty that you are committing a sin or whatever. Then, because you refuse to look into it, it tends to bottle up. It collects like air in a balloon and one day, sooner or later, it will tend to burst out.

So that seems to be an unskillful way of looking at it. There is nothing wrong with the tradition or the teaching, but if you panic, if you feel terribly shy and you panic, then the process of panicking doesn't let you see it, doesn't let you examine it. It doesn't matter whether the physical application is important or not; that seems to be a secondary thing. It is a question of the passion itself. Such orthodox discipline seems only to be applicable to certain types of people. But there still will be a desire to put passion into physical application. I'm talking about vajra passion in particular. When we don't go through this basic traditional discipline, or shila, if we're not fit to follow this particular orthodoxy, then the next important point is how then are we going to manage it?

When we hear "wild" and "free," we still tend to think in terms of neurotic and erratic. That isn't so, strangely enough. If we let vajra passion loose, this primeval passion, it does not become at all neurotic. By the very fact that you let it loose, there is no boundary to resist anything at all. Such passion acts with wisdom, with intelligence; intelligence automatically sorts its way through.

Then one will be able to set up proper communication, real communication, because that is its basic nature. When we talk of "wildness" and "freedom," we tend to think always in terms of ape quality, as though a gorilla were let loose from the zoo. But I suppose that is a natural thing: if we are gorillas ourselves, we cannot think the other way around. But if we really let that passion loose—at the stage when gorillas were in jungles, before they were captured in the zoo cages, that kind of primeval state—it is not going to destroy anyone at all, because that passion contains a natural instinct for a balanced state of being.

In this case, in the case of sex or anything else in our lives, passion also contains wonderful, skillful communication. At the beginning of such communication, we wouldn't feel self-conscious as we did in the other case. That is the starting point: we feel completely natural and open. And the secondary process is that because you don't feel any kind of self-conscious inhibition, the process of communication, of meeting, of seeing the qualities of your partner or other person, is quite extraordinary, because you are not judging them in terms of their rugged and juicy quality alone. You are seeing in terms of the whole setup, the whole quality. Like pure gold, it is beautiful, solid, and majestic from the outside; and it will also be solid and beautiful inside. It is like pure gold because you don't see only the surface; you see the whole way through.

That is the open and skillful way of seeing and applying passion. Applying passion with wisdom, you could see the whole process and not only be fascinated and overwhelmed by the exterior alone. Instead, when you see the exterior, that simultaneously also puts you through to the interior as well. You go through the whole way, completely and thoroughly, so you reach right to the heart of the situation. Then, if there is a meeting of two people, that relationship also will be very enlightening. You don't only see that person as pure physical attraction or pure habitual pattern, but you see the outside along with the inside. This applies to any form of communication, not only sex. Such communication is whole-way-through communication.

Now we've got another problem, quite a grave problem. That is, supposing you see right through somebody, and that other person doesn't want you to see right through—then that person will be horrified of you and run away. Then what do you do? Well, since you have made your communication completely and thoroughly, there is communication from the other side as well. If that person runs away from you, that is

that person's way of communicating to you. So you wouldn't pursue a further investigation, because if you did pursue a further investigation and chase after that person, then sooner or later you are going to turn out to be a demon from that person's point of view—a vampire, in fact. As far as that person's point of view, you saw the whole way through their body—they have such juicy fat and meat inside them that you would like to eat it up—and the more you try to pursue them, the more you are going to fail.

But there must be something wrong with you, as well, if that person reacts that way. You can't always be right. Perhaps you look through too sharply with your desire; perhaps you are too penetrating. Since you possess such beautiful, keen eyes of penetrating passion and wisdom, you don't want to abuse that, you don't want to play with it. I'm not talking in terms of trying to win that person over necessarily, but in general, there must be something else wrong with your application of that passion. And it tends to happen automatically that, if you possess some particular power or gift of energy—it is quite natural with anybody, everybody, most people—you tend to abuse that power, to misuse it by trying to penetrate through every spare corner, every spare part. Something's lacking there, which is quite obvious—a sense of humor—which also means panoramic awareness, a feeling of space and openness.

It was often the case, according to a lot of stories in the scriptures, that the application of a bodhisattva's work failed because the bodhisattva did not have a sense of humor. If a bodhisattva is too honest, too deadly serious, if he or she knows the whole application but doesn't want to put anything in to accompany that application, which is a sense of humor, then it will be blunt bodhisattva action. In this case, it's the same thing. You have all your wisdom, all your compassion and everything, but you haven't got a sense of humor, which is dhyana, or meditation.

So if you try to push things too far, that means you don't feel the area properly. You only feel the area because of your relationship to it: you see what's wrong there, what's wrong here, but you don't see what's on the other side. You don't see the profile vision of the whole thing, which accompanies it. That very much needs a sense of humor. Sometimes people run away from you because they want a game from you. They don't want straight, honest, serious involvement with you.

They want to play a game with you. In that case, if *they* have a sense of humor and you don't, then you become demonic.

This is the particular point where lalita, or dancing with the situation, comes in. *Lalita* means "dance with reality," "dance with apparent phenomena." In the case of vajra passion, when you want something very badly, you don't just extend your automatic hand, you don't extend your automatic eye and hand—you just admire it. Instead of making a move from your side, you automatically expect a move from the other side. That is learning to dance with the situation.

We often feel that we are very blunt in situations. Generally in life, if we disagree with something, we begin to feel tremendously self-conscious. We don't know how to end that particular scene, because we put that scene together. That is a kind of unskillful action. The point is that you don't have to create the whole scene at all. You just watch the scene, work with the scene, and learn to dance with it. So that scene doesn't become your scene, it becomes a mutual scene, a dancing together.

Then, in fact, you get an ideal situation: no one is self-conscious, because it is a mutual scene. Self-consciousness means stagnation: one doesn't know how to go beyond that scene. Otherwise, beyond that self-consciousness, it becomes very creative. The relationship becomes tremendously creative and progressive. In the case of vajra passion and wisdom, the relationship also could be very beautiful, because both partners are relaxed completely, both people are taking part together completely, so no one has to play the lead. It seems that the sexual relationship is one of the most important examples of such communication, but it could apply to other forms of communication as well.

In all kinds of communication, there is the feminine principle and the masculine principle. There is always the skillful aspect and the chaotic aspect, or the skillful aspect and the seductive aspect, in any kind of relationship—whether it is purely conversation, or correspondence, or a relationship with nature, or whatever it may be. There is always prajna and upaya; wisdom and skillful means always follow along. In the sexual relationship, it seems to play very vividly, very obviously. That is why in the yogic tradition it is one of the most inspiring symbols of all. A very interesting point about that symbolism is that the symbol does not become purely a metaphor for something at all; it becomes the real, living application. The sexual relationship becomes a living, basic example or symbol, mudra, as you call it.

In all cases, unless a kind of all-pervading openness, or open space, is created, communication cannot take place anywhere at all—whether in the relationship of two people, the relationship of friends, or any other situation. So a leap is very, very important. It is a process of leaping. Yourself as skillful means, leaping into the air, which is the feminine principle of wisdom. Wisdom must be accompanied by skillful action, which is how to deal with that wisdom, how to swim in that ocean of wisdom. Wisdom also inspires tremendously the other aspects of life: if that aspect of life is basically set, properly, right, and in a good way, then there is also the other, creative aspect of life.

The twofold principles—the masculine and feminine aspects of life—begin to create in their own way, very beautifully. And that develops into what is called in the vajrayana tradition, "the four karmas," or four actions. That is to say, with this kind of harmonious relationship, you could bring about peace, you could gather richness, you could subdue or conquer whatever you wanted to subdue, and destroy whatever you would like to destroy or overcome.

This relationship of masculine and feminine principles is the basic formula of the mandala: the ground where you build the mandala is the feminine principle of openness, or prajna, and how you use that ground in a skillful way in constructing the mandala is the masculine principle of skillful means, or upaya. I'm sure that if you saw the iconographies of any vajrayana tradition, they would always display these two basic principles—always. And they could be very inspiring.

Would you like to have any discussion?

Student: What about this free passion? It is certainly going to operate with more than one person, and that leads to trouble, doesn't it? Say you're married and you are attracted to somebody else, then what?

Rinpoche: I don't think that is really free passion at all. It is a reaction against something that makes you feel attracted to someone else. Because you married, you are stuck together, and therefore you psychologically begin to feel an anarchist attitude. I don't think that is free at all. It is a kind of dissatisfaction, that the relationship is not right—and the sooner the relationship could be reconciled the better. You see, *free* is a very interesting word. It could be "free-free" or it could be "free-wild."

S: Could you talk a little more about what you mean by "free-free" and "free-wild"?

R: Well, "free-free" is that you are free not because you have been freed by somebody else, but because you discover that you can do what you like—you discover that you have the space to move about. "Free-wild" is that you begin to feel you have managed to snatch freedom from somewhere else; it is reacting against imprisonment.

Then, instead of creating space, you automatically tend to fill up the space by all sorts of other things. It becomes wild because it is like an echo—once you shout more, the sound will come back to you more as well. It is that kind of continual creation of your own spider's web. It becomes wild at the end: it has to be wild because it is frantic. It is wild in the sense of neurotic. Immediately when you realize you've got freedom in the "free-wild" sense, you begin to shout, you begin to fill the whole of space. And the sound comes back to you. You shout more and more until finally the whole thing becomes complete chaos. You are creating your own imprisonment under the pretense of freedom. So it is a question of space or not.

S: What is the relationship of mahasukha, great bliss, to vajra passion?

R: It is the meeting point, ultimate communication. When you meet, when you are able to establish ultimate communication, there will be tremendous joy, because there is no chaos with the dance anymore. It is like the meeting of teacher and disciple, a kind of ultimate meeting point, great joy. The sudden realization of such communication could exist and does exist.

S: I have a question about the expression of passions. Generally, just sitting still, I'll feel a certain passion and I seek to express it through artistic expression—painting, writing, dancing, or something like that. Then I feel temporary relief. And then a new passion or desire arises. Each time I work myself up completely, and that is only to temporarily get rid of a small passion. What will I do when it's unlimited?

R: Vajra passion doesn't particularly inspire you to fill the space at all, rather than use the space. In this case, where you have the desire to do this and that, it sounds like whenever any space is created, you would like to fill those gaps by doing things, which is a kind of panic. But in terms of limitless passion, I don't think you can do anything at all, because you become completely powerless. Vajra passion, open passion—transcendental passion, so to speak—doesn't inspire you to fill the space immediately at all. It inspires you to create *more* space. So you don't necessarily have to do anything immediately—instead you enjoy the space more.

S: Could you say something about celibacy and the emphasis on the practice of celibacy in so many traditions?

R: As I said in the beginning of the talk, celibacy is one way of dealing with desire. In the case of celibacy, you don't try to suppress desire at all, but you try to examine the mental aspect of passion and you try to see the chaotic quality of its physical application.

I don't know about Christianity, but certainly in the Buddhist tradition you are not trying to suppress any kind of desire that comes into your mind. Instead you are supposed to look at it, become familiar with it. Then it automatically wears out. When you realize the physical application purely as an extension of that desire, you see the childish quality of it. But you still have to make communication; the communicative quality has to continue. You have to channel your energy into the communication process, which automatically simplifies life.

The basic monastic tradition, as a whole, is not based purely on suppression or ascetic practice at all. It is based on simplification, simplicity, the simplicity of life, the simplicity of noninvolvement, the simplicity of being alone. There's a great deal of emphasis made on the physical, geographical relationship with situations, which is a basic kind of thing. Therefore, when any mental desire or passion comes up, you have to work with it. You have to become familiar with it first, then you begin to see the simplicity of the aloneness, the loneliness. That quality of loneliness provides a kind of consort, or company. The loneliness is company, and it begins to inspire as the feminine principle your active desires, whatever you have in mind. Therefore, in the Buddhist tradition, people who are in the celibate or monastic life must continue to practice the discipline of yoga. Mentally, they must go through it.

S: What is feminine about the wisdom principle?

R: Wisdom is learning, knowledge, isn't it? Knowledge could be creative, producing further knowledge, so it is the mother principle. Knowledge also could be destructive, because you know further how to create chaos. Therefore, there is a destructive quality as well as a creative quality. It's the mother principle, basically.

And upaya, or skillful means, is the masculine principle because, depending on how you deal with the wisdom, it could be creative or destructive. If you do not deal with it skillfully, it becomes destructive. It is like the relationship of the ground and what you plant in the ground.

The feminine principle would be the basic ground, which nourishes the action you put on it. It is the same principle as father and mother.

S: In Genesis, it says that Eve wanted to know and be wise. That was what her temptation was. But if she knew and were wise, then she would be as God, and that was why she was punished.

R: That's a very interesting point, because the feminine principle contains that inquisitive quality as well: wisdom, wanting to learn, wanting to know everything, wanting to survey every corner. There is an inquisitive quality, because she realizes she's the ground of everything and she would like to explore it. That is what you call the "dakini principle" in the Buddhist tradition, which is a similar thing.

S: Is the idea that the masculine principle is supposed to control that?

R: In the sense of showing the feminine principle the skillful move to put its pattern in the right order, so to speak, because wisdom is knowing, pure knowing. It is not connected with action. So this is rather like the contrast between practice and philosophy, or theory.

S: Many people seem to feel that giving physical expression to one's sexuality hinders spiritual development. What do you think of this kind of thing?

R: I think, as is said in the scriptures—particularly yoga texts, strangely enough—it depends on the individual, whether you are putting all your possessiveness into the process. If you put all your greedy quality into it, then because your energy is transformed into real passion, sort of heavy passion, I think that is going to affect your spiritual life.

But if you could regard it as a communication process, I don't think it will affect you spiritually at all. In fact, it's going to inspire it, because it is a symbolic gesture, a physical gesture, the same as prostrating in front of the lineage, yogic exercises, or circumambulations. All sorts of physical exercises have been given to use your energy and learn to contact your body to the earth in order to work with spiritual energy, in order to inspire further. This could be said to be the same thing. But it is very much dependent on individuals.

S: So for some people it would be true?

R: It depends on if you are working with extreme desire, not just extreme desire, but desire in the sense of putting all your confusion into it in order to really get through it—which would be suicidal, in this case. But you cannot really make generalizations about anything. Everything very much depends on individuals' attitudes and how they do it.

Perhaps we should end here.

Hearty Discipline

At Naropa Institute we approach the whole educational system according to the principles of buddhadharma. We would like to present a traditional approach, similar to the Victorian style of education or other European approaches.

Recently, education in America has been based on entertainment. That is to say, the professors and teachers have become more and more cowardly. They don't want to push their students to follow their instructions or the traditional educational format.

In the schooling of young children in preparatory schools or elementary schools, we begin to find more and more that children are told to use their toys to learn with. "We are not going to push you to do anything drastic. You don't have to memorize; you don't have to think, even. Just play nicely with the toys we provide, and you will learn something about our history, our mathematics, or alphabet, and our grammar."

That is the idea of education that seems to have been created by the present generation, which had a terrible time with their schooling. Now they are in power, so they have invented a system of entertainment-as-education, so that children won't have to go through terrible education situations. That approach is actually based on good intentions, excellent, maybe. But, on the other hand, it could mean the destruction of the educational system altogether.

We have to push our children and ourselves to relate properly with the principles of education, which means discipline, respecting our elders, that is to say our teachers, and putting ourselves through a certain amount of painful situations.

Knowledge is often regarded as a gigantic, monumental tablet. We might wonder how we can climb on that or comprehend that gigantic thing, those stacks and stacks of information, knowledge, and wisdom—accomplishments of all kinds. How can we actually achieve something? How can we climb up and conquer and be on top of that Mount Everest of knowledge at all? However, we could recognize that learning is not necessarily all that difficult, although it does require effort.

An educational system based on very hearty discipline is absolutely necessary for us. We have to push ourselves, lock ourselves in our studies, and simply relate with the information that is given to us. We have to appreciate what's being taught to us; we have to memorize and experience the information, as well as relating to the challenge of discussion groups and all kinds of examinations. If we don't do that, we find ourselves nowhere.

We don't have to borrow toys to help us to study properly. Obviously, the concept of comfort, as well as entertainment, is out of the question. Comfort is not in the best interest of student or teacher. When we begin to present education as a toy or a lollipop, we begin to devalue our wisdom, and we reduce school to a candy bar approach, as opposed to a university or a center of learning. People have tried that many times, but it never brings success such as is achieved by someone who has learned orally, personally. There is no real experience taking place when we try to avoid discipline.

We are applying the Buddhist mentality or Buddhist approach to education at Naropa, rather than purely taking a religious approach to education. We are not particularly talking in terms of converting people to Buddhism, but we are talking in terms of bringing the inheritance of Buddhist methodology into our system of education.

At Nalanda University, Vikramashila, and other Buddhist centers of learning, the student, the practitioner, and the scholar concentrated one-pointedly, on the point. Education was a complete lifestyle. Students practiced and they concentrated one-pointedly. They memorized texts and thought about what was said in the texts, about whether the contents were valid or invalid.

When you follow these principles of education, you begin to use your logical, or critical, intelligence to examine what is presented to you. That critical intelligence is applied two ways: toward what is presented to you, the educational material, as well as toward who is going to be educated.

So you work with yourself as well. The two blades of the sword work simultaneously. Then you begin to find yourself examining things constantly. The process of education becomes very precise and clear and absolutely accurate. There is no room for mistakes at all.

In order to study and learn properly, we have to pull up our own socks. If we want to learn properly and study properly, we have to work at it; we have to work on it. There is no other way. There is no savior or god of knowledge who descends on our heads, so that one minute we're dumb and the next minute we are brilliant. Oh no! We have never heard of that. Nothing like that happens.

In the Buddhist tradition, we talk about individual salvation, or *sosor tharpa.* Everybody has to save himself or herself. Everybody has to prove himself. We are capable of individual salvation because we do possess our own inherent human dignity already, in any case. We are capable of learning properly, but we have to tune in to our dignity rather than trying to use lollipops and toys and gimmicks. So, no toy shop anymore.

Transpersonal Cooperation at Naropa

COOPERATION IN THE ORDINARY, personal sense is usually based on having some common ground, some common point of view. You are good friends and would like to maintain your friendship by working together. You might have an unspoken agreement to ignore each other's weaknesses, and you acknowledge each other's flair. Sometimes the cooperation is based on a businesslike approach—making sure you know what you are going to get out of it. Your territories are clearly defined and protected with a contrast or a gentlemen's agreement. Or there may be a common goal or a common enemy and the cooperation is based on a sense of mutual support. Very often schools and colleges are formed from some definite point of view—ethical or philosophical—and the wish to see this philosophy realized in practice, to help others directly or by setting an example.

This usual way of cooperation is based on the sense of sculpting a product rather than just letting it grow. When you would like to make a sculpture, you must first find the right material, picking and choosing, rejecting the unsuitable, until you find just what you are looking for. Then you form an image of what the final product will be and proceed to mold your material, making little adjustments here and there until you are satisfied with your creation. There is a sense of activity and showmanship. "Letting it grow" is not based on the end product; you are simply concerned with the developmental process. You nourish what needs to be nourished, care for what needs care, and destroy what needs to be destroyed. You are not particularly concerned with what the out-

come will be or how long it will take. There is no need to dwell on the details of your own contribution. At the same time, to let it grow does not mean total wildness in which anything is allowed without discrimination. The chaos has to be acknowledged and worked with, as such, which requires a sense of discipline.

At Naropa Institute we are working with the discipline of trying to transmit wisdom while overcoming neurosis at the same time. The insight derived from the Buddhist outlook and meditative approach provides the atmosphere of sanity which is beyond dogma, rather than establishing yet another dogma. Knowledge, meditation, and skillful action are the three components of the traditional approach to teaching known as the "three turnings of the wheel of dharma." Knowledge provides confirmation of experience of being, discovered in meditation practice. At the same time, knowledge is the vehicle for the communication to others of the sense of being. Knowledge and meditative experience are put into practice in everyday life as skillful action. That is to say, action which does not arise from any particular viewpoint but is direct cooperation with the energy of the situation as it is, without manipulation.

The idea of transpersonal cooperation is not necessarily to be involved in helping other people all the time, but rather to be fundamentally helpful to yourself. It is only through meditative discipline that the sense of cooperation with your basic being can develop. Perhaps we could say that transpersonal cooperation means noncooperation from the point of view of ego. If you do not cooperate with the trips and games of ego, then cooperation with your own basic being and that of others happens automatically. We cannot scheme or force cooperation; it develops organically when there is nonaggression, which boycotts ego trips.

The openness of nonaggression and the absence of dogma create the appropriate atmosphere for learning. The teacher's role seems to be to provide this atmosphere. While respecting the tradition for which he is a spokesman, he does not hide behind the subject mater but still remains a student himself. There is a sense of freedom and also a sense of dignity. Freedom is often interpreted as looseness, the absence of the need for any kind of effort, almost a sense of frivolousness. But respect for tradition seems to be an important part of the learning process. We can regard tradition as the foundation and stepping-stone for learning rather

than something to be rejected. You cannot grow if you cut off your roots. You will become a monster, having no relationship with your environment and no possibility of cooperation with it. Cooperation with one's background beyond personal trips provides richness and precision rather than pure inventiveness and the glamour of newness or the museum mentality of dwelling in the past.

The sense of total commitment to one tradition brings about the perspective and wisdom to work with ways that have developed in other traditions. Other disciplines can then be seen as process rather than purely for their end product. Bringing various disciplines together has to be more than eclectic-minded. Merely collecting many ideas and methods and trying to find a common link seems to bring only more confusion. It is more a question of providing an atmosphere of basic sanity in which all disciplines have a chance to refine themselves. It is like putting different particles in a chemical fluid—some are nourished and grow while others dissolve and disappear. We do not have to work with each particular discipline in detail but simply have to create the atmosphere as a natural working basis. The basic ground is nonaggression derived from the meditative training that each individual has worked through. In this case, we do not mean aggression in the sense of anger, but in the sense of tightness—holding on to your own logic and what you believe is true. The particular tradition to which you relate does not have to become a filter through which other disciplines are interpreted and molded. Rather, the point is the personal experience involved. Having fully incorporated into one's own life experience the knowledge and discipline learned through one tradition, you can then see the essential meaning of other traditions. When you are willing to let go and relax with experiences, not holding on to the sense of security in what you know, information becomes part of the learning process, and cooperation develops naturally.

Sparks

Marvin Casper: I think what we are trying to do with Naropa is not to create a Buddhist university, but more an atmosphere that acknowledges the basic problems of spiritual materialism and meditation. To bring in traditions selectively insofar as they have the spirit of meditation and a sensitivity to the issue of spiritual materialism. And it is not so much a sectarian thing of which tradition is followed, but more what spirit was the tradition practiced in, expounded, lived?

Ram Dass: But it still feels to me as someone teaching a Hindu tradition course here that this is an alien course to the general framework of Naropa. It doesn't feel to me a totally integrated situation yet.

Chögyam Trungpa: There is a particular philosophy of Naropa which is not so much trying to bring it together, like a spoonful of sugar in your lemonade so that it becomes more drinkable, but the point is more like a firework—not so much that each will fight with the other in the destructive sense, but that there is an enormous individualism in terms of the doctrines and teachings that are presented. All of them are valid but at the same time there is a meeting point which takes place in a spark!

RD: I enjoy the spark, but you can create a field in which there can be an equal number of contestants coming together to spark. I mean, why go into a Buddhist field to spark? The spark can be just where we come together, like you and I come together to do our dance, and that's the spark.

CT: I think it is the same thing, actually. Someone has to have some background somewhere. We can say why can't we do this in the Naropa ship going to the moon?

RD: Are we?

CT: But we've got to have it somewhere. We are doing it in the United States.

RD: Yes . . .

CT: In Boulder, Colorado . . . do you remember?

RD: Yes, if I take a stretch I can remember! There are two phenomena that have happened: one, there is the Toward the One concept—which I think is a little premature and uncooked—which is to bring everybody together, and we'll all love each other, and it will become an amalgam. That's putting the sugar in with the lemonade, and it is all palatable and sweet but nothing much is happening. It's all very nice, but it lacks the spark. But there is another way, a kind of arena, a fully collaborative arena to have the dialogue in. I am wondering, is that possible in America yet? Or do I have to go visit a Buddhist center, and then go fight with Yogi Bhajan, then go fight with Suzuki Roshi? I just go out and fight, I'm a freelance fighter! But there's no place where we can all come into an arena together, all share putting up the money, share taking the losses, share the dormitories, share the administration, share the dynamics. Are we ready for that kind of collaborative sparking?

CT: I don't think we are talking in that sense. I think we are talking in the experiential sense, like eating Mexican food which has lots of chili in it. If you are somewhat hesitant before you eat it, and you ask the waitress how it is, probably the waitress will say, "Oh, it is okay." Then when you eat you have the experience of Mexican food, and that is personal experience. Rather than debating with the chef and the cook about how it should be cooked, which is externalizing and debating the whole thing in the wrong way. It's how sparked this place is in everybody's mind. All the students taking cross-cultural courses of all kinds—the spark is taking place in them which makes them think twice. There is energy happening rather than completion. That's an internal spark we are talking about rather than our having to institute a sort of dharma game.

RD: Like Naropa Institute—which you just did by creating Naropa Institute.

MC: Well, if I may paraphrase, it isn't Buddhism that's the point, it's the gap between Buddhism or Hinduism or whatever that creates the spark. It's juxtaposing the system to go beyond them. I can see that there is a more heavily Buddhist system here in a sense, but creation or solidification of the Buddhist system is not the point, the point is to cut through systems.

RD: And I am saying that cutting through systems can be designed into the institution, as well as our saying inside, "Well, we know it's a Buddhist center, but we really know that it's not really a Buddhist center."

CT: I think the point is that we honor people's experiences and their intellect so that they can conduct their own warfare within themselves while being sharp scholars in language studies, or T'ai Chi, or whatever. We don't teach them how to conduct skeptical search.

RD: Right. We don't teach Battle I, II. We assume they know how to do it.

CT: Because the situation is created already; there is pressure, there is enormous energy, there is internal experience.

Duncan Campbell: Well, it almost sounds like the way that you were talking about the hot chili and the representation of Naropa Institute—it is saying that there are no answers. That no one is going to find an easy way to relate to himself and his own experience, but there is going to be that constant interaction, that spark, the flame between the intellect and intuition, between one tradition and another tradition, one culture and another culture, and that each one of us has to experience that. If it's not being experienced, nothing is happening.

MC: Right. One could look at any tradition as a trap and say that the purpose of the tradition is to build into itself an escape from its own tradition. And a tradition is good only to the extent that it provides the mechanisms by which you escape from it. Or by which you escape from cruder versions of it to more subtle versions beyond, to breaking through the systematization of it so that the idea of juxtaposing systems, and of juxtaposing intellect and meditation, creates an opportunity to further spark that kind of process.

RD: Escape or entrapment?

MC: Escape.

RD: The predicament is that you don't want to escape until you've been entrapped.

CT: I think that's the point, actually. Tradition provides you right in the beginning with a good setting and provides food, home, shelter, companionship, and someone to look up to, so you can copy his style, her style, whatever. Then at a certain point you begin to feel like you're sinking down into the ground; you begin to find that tradition is entrapment, imprisonment. Then you begin to look at it twice, thrice, and find

out more about it. Why are you imprisoned? Is it because the tradition is inadequate? That you are such a smart person?

RD: Or has your stance toward the tradition been inadequate?

CT: And then there is a strong possibility of a changing shift which creates a spark. And then again tradition comes back—but instead of being a jail—as a temple, a monastery, or a zendo. It's rediscovering one's imprisonment as a sacredness of some kind . . .

Education for an Enlightened Society

WELCOME, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. Tonight we are supposed to discuss education for an enlightened society. We are not talking in terms of how to educate an enlightened society which already exists. Our particular approach here is that such a thing as an enlightened educational system exists, which could bring about the enlightenment of the whole world.

The concept of enlightenment is an interesting one. Maybe we should look at that first. Enlightenment, according to the Buddhist tradition, is a self-existing state of mind, which contains a tremendous sense of wakefulness as opposed to sleep. It also contains tremendous richness, tremendous joy, and above all, a tremendous sense of sanity. Such a society, that actually possesses that possibility, is not far away from us. We are not talking about a Utopian world, and we are not particularly referring to any hidden corners of the world such as Atlantis, where things are supposedly properly organized, properly run. We are saying that a society of such caliber, so to speak, is here, right here. You are the enlightened society, every one of you, with no mistakes of course. If there were a mistake, you wouldn't be here. Since there was no mistake, therefore you are here. So you are all the enlightened society. You are individuals with the possibility, the potential of enlightenment. Maybe you have already been exposed to such a situation, either directly or indirectly, but in any case you are all that type of person. That is why you are here.

I would like to emphasize again and again that I am not kidding. This state of mind is real, it's definite. For one thing, it could be embryonic: suddenly you have had an urge to come and find out. Often, you don't

have an exact idea what you're looking for, but you are looking for something, and that something has tremendous strength in your mind. It might be quite vague, but there's *something* you are looking for. We're not talking here about search particularly, but you have the sense of possibilities which are already in your basic existence. What is needed is just to touch on a certain point, so that the whole thing can be woken up, actualized and realized, properly and fully. So, ladies and gentlemen, let us not give up on anything at all. Let us proceed further and further. Let us go beyond and yet beyond. Let us cheer up.

When we talk about education, we are not talking purely in terms of making the illiterate literate. We're not particularly talking about a learning process which constantly delivers a tremendous slap on the face and exposes your stupidity, a process in which the more you're confronted with learned people, the more stupid you feel. We're not talking about education as a form of insult to the learner. That has been the problem all along. The form of education we're talking about is a celebration rather than a constant insult. We are talking in terms of celebration of some kind, which of course takes place in a certain systematic process.

First of all, a meeting of minds has to take place; you have to acknowledge your own existence and that of your teacher or teachers. Even though you might be studying something extremely simple, like how to be a seamstress, how to make bread, or how to sweep the floor, there has to be a meeting of the minds of the teacher and student. The teacher's attitude is no longer that he or she is dealing with ignorant people, but instead that he is dealing with tremendous intelligence on the student's part. Some kind of spark is taking place, some new form of friendship. So the student and the teacher form a tremendous friendship.

However, we should not mistake that to mean that the teacher is being casual, being nice to the student in a freestyle manner. This kind of friendship is based on mutual understanding. And this kind of friendship could become the kindling wood with which you set the fire of knowledge.

When you and the teacher meet together, there is tremendous dignity, almost at the level of stiffness but not quite. There's some kind of awe obviously, but behind the whole thing, there's delight. There's a sense that you are entering into a world which is well thought out, well disciplined, well formed, well educated—which is quite lovely. After that, you begin to discover that you have stacks of things to learn. Some-

times you might feel slightly put off; there's so much information, so many technicalities and so much wisdom that you have to pick up—stacks of things. When you look up, you see books reaching all the way up to the ceiling. The teacher says, "You'll have to memorize all of this, and I'm going to help you. You'll do it" and you say, "Yeah, I will?"

This is no joke; it actually does apply to us. You find a depth in learning which goes into the very core of your existence, and you find such a width or wideness in learning that you actually can't see the edges. It begins to dissolve with the sky because it reaches so far and wide. It is like being in the middle of the ocean: when you look out ahead, you get confused about which is the ocean and which is the sky. It seems to be one big blue world. It's such a vast thing. But we shouldn't be put off or overwhelmed particularly. We should go ahead and do it.

According to the Buddhist tradition, there are three levels of learning. The first level is studying, that is, listening and collecting. As long as there is enough friendship and the meeting of the two minds is taking place, there should be no problem at all in learning. Obviously, there are no particular highlights or entertainment; there are no commercials in the middle. Learning is one gigantic, vast world that you get into. It could be delightful provided you raise your sense of richness. Often, students break down because they begin to feel poverty-stricken. Then the learning situation becomes tedious, a hassle. But that is not necessary. You could take a different attitude altogether and begin to find that learning is terrific, so good. Obviously, certain topics might seem like a struggle, but that kind of struggle is no longer regarded as problematic. Struggle in that sense is regarded as an expedition.

Some appreciation of challenge is absolutely necessary. If you begin to stick to your territoriality and look for security, for a home, for a place where you could lie down and take a rest; if you begin to hold on to whatever you can that's familiar and reject anything that is not familiar, that is not so good. As students, you could feel a tremendous sense of journey or expedition taking place. Sometimes you come up with unfamiliar situations, territories, and landmarks—so what? Just keep going. Keep going that way, constantly going on. Then there will be no problem. A few months later, when you look at your stacks of books, they're slightly lower. They have already begun to dissolve. If you look back at when you first came to your library, the stacks were so huge, and now they are slightly workable. A couple of years later, they begin to be even

lower down; they become eye level. After several years, the stacks of books have dissolved, and you find that you know them all. And you'll be surprised at yourself, at how you did all that. It is magic in some sense, educational magic.

When all the books have been dissolved and you end up in a big empty hallway, a big room with no books, when you have dissolved all the stacks and experienced all the books, still some further journey needs to be made. Then you have to contemplate what you've learned, what you've studied. That is the second stage: first *studying*, second *contemplating*. At this point, you find that you still feel strange. You've absorbed so much understanding and information, but still you don't quite know how to handle those things, how actually to incorporate them into your lives, how actually to make use of them. So there's a need for you to pay more attention to how you have learned, how you have experienced all of that—there's a need for contemplating, thinking.

If the learning process is good and pure, then it always has applications to your life, all the time. There is no problem with that. But how to go about finding them is interesting. You have to categorize in your state of mind, how actually to put into effect what you've learned, how to integrate it into your lifestyle. Contemplating here means making everything you have learned part of your life. That is to say, the truths being taught should not be regarded as alien truths, but they should be made part of your whole existence. In that way, you no longer regard what you learn as some foreign element that you have picked up, but it becomes part of your system altogether.

Number three is *meditation*. Whatever you have picked up, whatever you have learned, should become a way to attain access to your neuroses. That might be regarded as a tall order, but it is possible. If you begin to pay attention to one particular theme that you've studied, you can use that as a way of actually understanding yourself. Having collected information and having identified with the knowledge, then next, you have to use what you have learned as a way to develop precision, meditation. Meditation here does not mean meditating on anything as such or filling your mind. Meditation here means an unconditional meditative state. This does not necessarily mean you go into a trance or experience any euphoric state of mind, but simply that you are *alert* on the spot. You are precise on the spot, and your intelligence is sharpened so much

that you can actually be on the dot all the time. So you begin to experience some sense of freshness, which is the meditative state.

The concept of education in an enlightened society is no longer problematic at this point. It is very simple, but it requires a lot of effort and intelligence, and also genuineness. The purpose of education should not be to learn how to cheat the world, to gain points in one-upmanship. Obviously, it should not be that way. The purpose of learning, education, and study is to create further dignity in your living situation, which might be dealing with your grandfather, grandmother, your parents, brothers and sisters, your children. What you are learning, what you are about to learn, or what you have learned could implement waking up society in the sense of not allowing it to fall asleep. The final result is that there is no such thing as casualness or uptightness. Instead, there is some sense of balance, discipline, and, to put it into a very simple word, self-respect. You as individuals respect yourselves and you also respect your teacher and your environment. In turn there is no crime, no resentment, and no aggression. On the other hand, it's not as flat as that may sound. There's tremendous energy sparkling up all the time, so the enlightened society is kept well balanced, and that is very beautiful. Since we here are the enlightened society right now, we can actually do that. It has been done before, it will be done in the future, and we are doing it right now. Thank you.

If you have any questions, you're welcome. Please don't hesitate.

Question: Rinpoche, it seems that in many traditional academic contexts, study actually increases aggression. Yet in many different places you talk about study as increasing one's sense of gentleness. Could you comment on the difference between the kind of study that leads to gentleness versus the kind that leads to aggressiveness?

Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it's probably a question of motivation and also of style. In the basic educational system that exists presently, there's always the emphasis that you should try to overcome your schooling, so that after you finish school you can then relax and maybe get married, have a good job, and become rich. The traditional wisdom that's taught by our parents, your grandfather, grandmother, and everyone says that the educational system is something that is somewhat dirty but necessary to go through, which you afterward overcome. In the enlightened approach that we are talking about, the learning proc-

ess is fun. It is no longer an insult to you. If you didn't know anything about anything, the teacher wouldn't come along and say, "Look how stupid you are." The teacher would say, "Well, there's more than that. You should find it out"—which is not an insult, but a suggestion of possibilities, unfolding possibilities taking place. If knowledge is presented that way, then you begin to feel ambitious in a very positive sense. It's like being very hungry, then being offered a ten-course meal: the first course tastes fine, and you realize there are yet more courses coming, and that dessert is included as well.

So I think we can replace aggression with inquisitiveness and some notion of virya, or exertion, which is connected with joy. As long as we are able to whet the student's appetite, he or she will feel hungry rather than insulted. I think that's the key to it. In the Western educational systems, particularly in America, in order to make students work harder, you push them into a corner and tell them how bad they have been. If they're aggressive enough, they'll say, "All right, I'm going to come out. I'm going to get back at this teacher. I'm going to be better than he or she is"—and sometimes that works. I'm sure a lot of people have done that in the past. But the general psychological state of that educational world is not very healthy. It is somewhat devastating, in fact, and our future students will suffer from that.

Q: I have another question related to that. Do you think there is any relationship between the content of what you're studying, the subject matter, and this kind of excitement you're talking about? Are some subjects more important to study than others?

VCTR: Not necessarily. I don't think so. Any subject you pick up can have a connection with your sense of building yourself up in the positive sense, and that is what makes the learning situation become very good. For instance, you might be studying automobile mechanics, or something like that, and become a good person in that way. You could have a sense of humor about how to fix motorcars, and you could develop tremendous sanity. You could become a very beautiful person who fixes up motorcars. That's not necessarily the peak of ambition from the point of view of the rest of the world, you know. It may not be like becoming a statesman, an enlightened person, a professor, or anything like that. But if you are enough in contact with a sense of education or learning, if you have enough inquisitiveness, then your own wisdom and your own sanity are built in. That is why we call it enlightened society. From

the so-called top level to the bottom, all the different kinds of labor and knowledge that exist have the experience of sanity in common. So we don't develop anything like the four caste levels which exist in the Hindu tradition. We simply say that whatever a person's discipline may be, there's always the seed of enlightenment within it—always. So I don't see any particular problems at all.

Q: Thank you.

VCTR: Thank you!

Q: Which is more sane and more enlightened, a socialist society or a capitalist society?

VCTR: Neither.

Q: What do you propose as an alternative for those?

VCTR: Well, enlightened society. [*Laughter and applause*]

Q: Will that dissolve the class struggle? Will there no longer be exploiters and the exploited?

VCTR: I think so. That is why it's called enlightened society. It is possible, you know, sir. It is highly possible. We might have to conform with some of the educational systems that have been set up by the socialists or the capitalists. We might have to use their case histories, so to speak. But on the other hand, we don't have to stick to one or the other. They both have some wisdom, and they both also have failures. So it is possible to develop enlightened society, independent of those two. Welcome to the enlightened society.

Q: Rinpoche, when you were describing the third stage of learning, you said that some part of your field of study could be used as the subject of meditation. Could you say something more about that?

VCTR: No. [*Laughter*] We just sit. That's all.

Q: That's quite clear, but why does education come into the picture?

VCTR: Well, you are working with your basic state of mind, which is a product of education, and also what is being educated. It's very simple.

Q: So the basic mind is the product of education—

VCTR: As well as the producer of education. That's where the term *self-liberated* comes from. The idea is that the liberator, the liberated, and liberation become one thing.

Q: Do you feel that it is necessary to have a sense of purpose to go from poverty to the sense of richness that you spoke of?

VCTR: No. It takes a sense of trust in oneself rather than purpose. Usually when somebody is rich, his wealth, as you said, is based on his

sense of purpose in declaring his existence. But in our case, in an enlightened society, richness is self-existing. It is our natural state of being, in which we have good posture and a dignified look, but it is not a product of anything. It is free from socialism and capitalism.

Q: So we remain in a state of richness, but we don't have a sense of goal. Is that right?

VCTR: We are there already, so we don't need a goal. If we had a goal, we would become like the others, the communists or the capitalists. So we don't have a goal, but we do have a positive, healthy pride in our existence as an enlightened society. It's very natural, just a way of being rather than an exertion. Do you see what I mean? We are just *there,* on the spot, and we feel good and sufficient. We don't have to borrow anything from anyone else. We don't have to take aspirin.

Q: Thank you.

APPENDIX

Space Therapy and the Maitri Project

MARVIN CASPER

THE MAITRI PROJECT is an application of Tibetan Buddhist psychology and meditation practice to the problem of mental disorder. It has been developed by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, a Tibetan Buddhist meditation master who has founded several Buddhist centers in the United States.

The therapy involves living in a small, closely interacting residential community. For the first few years, there will be a maximum of twenty residents, twelve of whom will be staff members trained in Buddhist psychology and meditation practice. The patients will be highly neurotic but capable of at least marginal functioning in society. In addition to the discipline of communal living, the patients also practice a specific therapeutic discipline adopted from Buddhist meditation practice termed "space therapy."

In order to understand the dynamics of the communal and space therapies, it is necessary to review the basic principles of Buddhist psychology upon which the therapies are based.

According to Buddhist psychology, the basis of neurosis is the tendency to solidify energy into a barrier that separates space into two entities, "I" and "other," the space in here and the space out there. This process is technically termed "dualistic fixation." First there is the initial

creation of the barrier, the sensing of other, and then the inference of inner or I. This is the birth of ego. We identify with what is in here and struggle to relate to what is out there. The barrier causes an imbalance between inside and outside. The struggle to redress the imbalance further solidifies the wall. The irony of the barrier-creating process is that we lose track of the fact that we have created the barrier and, instead, act as if it was always there.

After the initial creation of I and other, I feels the territory outside itself, determining if it is threatening, attractive, or uninteresting. Feeling the environment is followed by: impulsive action—passion, aggression, or ignoring—pulling in what is seductive, pushing away what is threatening or repelling, ignoring what is uninteresting or irritating. But feeling and impulse action are crude ways of defending and enhancing ego. The next response is conceptual discrimination, fitting phenomena into categories, which makes the world much more manageable and intelligible. Finally, whole fantasy worlds are created to shield and entertain ego. Emotions are the highlights of the fantasies while discursive thoughts, images, and memories sustain the story line. A story of ego's hopes and fears, victories and defeats, virtues and vices is developed. In highly neurotic people, elaborate subplots or "problems" then develop from the initial drama. The subplots become very complicated and compelling, often overshadowing the main drama. In psychotic people, the subplots completely overshadow the main drama. The different stages of ego development—the initial split of I and other, feeling, impulse, conceptualization, and the various fantasy worlds are technically referred to as the five *skandhas.* From moment to moment the five skandhas are recreated in such a manner that it seems like the ego drama is continuous. Clinging to the apparent continuity and solidity of ego, ceaselessly trying to maintain I and mine, is the root of neurosis. This effort clashes with the inevitability of change, with the ever-recurring death and birth of ego, and, therefore, causes suffering.

The degree of neurosis and suffering that a person experiences is related to the amount of inner space and clarity available to him. If a person feels that his inner resources for coping with and appreciating life are very limited, then the world outside seems highly alien, seductive, and threatening. He feels compelled to struggle to remove threats and draw in what is valuable. But the struggle is self-defeating. It intensifies the solidity of the barrier and results in feelings of inner poverty and

restricted space. Thus to a highly neurotic person, the outer world is extremely claustrophobic and confusing. The level of psychosis is reached when the fear of outside is so great that we panic and become absorbed in a fantasy world that has little connection with our surroundings.

The goal of Maitri therapy is to give a patient a sense of more inner space, more strength and intelligence, more acceptance of himself and the world. The clarity and calm possible with such an inner space is the first step toward sanity. The relationship of inner and outer spaces is stabilized sufficiently so that the struggle with the world is relaxed. Further psychological development involves clearly seeing how the emotions and fantasies develop, and how they are used as entertainment and defense. But before we can fundamentally question the dramas in which we are involved, there must be some calmness and clarity, some spaciousness in our outer world. Only then, after the turbulent waters become gently flowing and clear, can the outline of the barrier itself be seen. So, in a sense, the goal of Maitri therapy is to have the patient become more familiar and comfortable with ego, to make friends with his neurotic ways. At this level we are not so much cutting through a person's drama as we are cutting through the subplots that obscure the main story line: thus, clearly seeing the transparency of the subplots, then the dramas, then the concepts, and finally the barrier itself. One works with more and more refined levels of dualistic fixation.

The subplots and dramas are neurotic distortions of basic styles of relating to space. The therapeutic process is not to eliminate these styles of relationship but to cut through the ego game of territoriality associated with each style. The whole idea of Buddhist therapy or meditation is therefore to work with the core of neurosis, clinging to territory, rather than try to change a person's style of relating to the world. Individual differences in energy flow, and in cultural and historical circumstances, are not problems. Released from the distortions caused by territorial clinging, the styles manifest as sane expressions of intelligence. Thus, we need not build up positive or sane qualities. If we part the clouds of confusion, the sun of sanity will shine through.

The basic styles of relating to space are classified in terms of the "Buddha families"—*vajra, ratna, padma, karma, buddha.* According to Tibetan Buddhist tantra, the Buddha families are fundamental patterns of energy which manifest in all phenomenal experience. Thus landscapes, colors, sounds, foods, and climates, as well as personality types,

can all be classified in terms of the Buddha families. In the following descriptions of the basic styles of relating to space, the neurotic aspect will be emphasized.

Vajra movement involves sweeping over and surveying the entire area facing you, clearly mirroring the field of vision. It is like clear water freely flowing over a surface. It fills all the space but the surface underneath it can be seen clearly. Vajra neurosis involves fear of being surprised, confused, or overwhelmed by the outside, so one continually monitors the environment for threats. When a threat is detected, we respond by cold or hot anger—pushing the world away by creating a cold wall the holds phenomena at a distance or a hot front that repels them. Vajra is associated with abstract intellect, with mapping relationships so as to have a clear, comprehensive view of a situation. In the neurotic state, the abstracting process becomes compulsive and loses contact with phenomena. One becomes self-righteous, justifying everything in terms of one's "system" and filtering out inconvenient facts. It also leads to intellectual frivolousness, getting caught up in word games divorced from experience, or compulsively figuring out how things fit together and what rule of conduct applies to a situation. On a bodily level it involves excessive visual and head orientation, always trying to see around the corner or behind your back, watching every corner.

Ratna is associated with substance. It involves expanding to fill up and solidify every container. Ratna neurosis is connected with feelings of not being substantial or solid enough. The world in here is insufficient, poor. The richness, the substance is out there. So the tendency of the ratna neurosis is to expand its substance to incorporate the outside into its territory. There is a tendency to be overbearing, mothering, imperious—trying to be the center of one's world, the principal object of affection, attention, approval. One is always hungry and needs the food of more possessions, more psychological gratifications, more confirmations of one's richness. Intellectually, ratna neurosis manifests as indiscriminate collecting and spewing out of facts, words, ideas, contacts, an overstuffed mind. The emotion associated with ratna is pride. One is continually building monuments to oneself, reassuring oneself of importance and worth—you are heavy, significant, central in relation to your world. Physically ratna is very concerned about material comfort—ornate surroundings, much rich food, soft furniture. Life is a series of nourishing or unnourishing events.

In *padma* neurosis, one tries to draw things into one's world, to seduce phenomena. There is a sense of incompleteness, a seeking of something to entertain or enrich ourselves. The basic quality of padma is relating to the immediate presence of "other." While karma is associated with direct movement and vajra with clear seeing, padma is feeling presence. The more we panic about losing the presence of other, the more we struggle to hold on to other so as to feel its presence. We want to draw "that" into "this" area and keep it here, possess it in order to feel it. Intellectually, padma neurosis involves getting caught in a succession of unrelated details, scattering one's attention. One gets lost in the surfaces. A project is started with great enthusiasm but one quickly loses interest and goes on to the next thing. Emotionally, padma neurosis involves passion, grasping desired objects and the frustrations of rejection or loss. There is a tendency toward continuous friendliness, sugary sweet kindness, and hypersensitivity to rejection or coldness, to any withdrawal of presence. Physically, one is preoccupied with pleasure and pain.

Karma is associated with thrusting movement, jumping from place to place, trying to control phenomena by direct manipulation. It is symbolized by a sword and the wind. It is like an army thrusting forward by achieving a long, narrow penetration of enemy lines, trying to destroy the enemies' headquarters. But since its thrust is narrow and long, it is vulnerable to attacks from the flank. At the head of the column, the general can only see ahead of him. He is afraid that the enemy will cut him off from his home base. Consequently the characteristic karma neurosis involves paranoia—fear of being attacked, fear of being inadequate, fear of being left out, fear of losing track. This leads to a preoccupation with controlling situations, with speedily busying oneself in organizing things, making things work efficiently. One must speed about to keep up with the continual changes that threaten disorder. The more preoccupied we are with order and control, the more disturbing and clearly defined chaos becomes and the more we must compulsively speed to recreate order. Intellectually, karma neurosis thinks compulsively in terms of means and ends, sequences of doing this and that to achieve something. There is also excessive concern with details to check that nothing was missed, no possible action undone. Furthermore, points of reference or comparisons are needed to frequently reassure ourselves that our position is se-

cure, our identity is solid, our world safe. So envy and jealousy are important aspects of the karma neurosis.

Buddha is associated with space and intelligence free of ego. It accommodates all phenomena, including the play of ratna, padma, karma, and vajra energies. Buddha neurosis involves the absence of spaciousness, the dulling of intelligence, and the freezing of the play of energies. The neurotic buddha world is like a small, thick, walled concrete box with no windows—a secure womb. Intellectually, buddha neurosis involves rigid habits of mind; fixed ideas; stubborn resistance to new information; a self-smug, self-righteous attitude. You just plod along oblivious to messages from the environment, following familiar habits. Intelligence and energy are ignored. Dirty dishes pile up, work is left undone, close personal relations are neglected, the same shirt is worn for a week. There is a tremendous fear of changes in rules, routines, views of right and wrong. Emotionally there is a dull neutrality and unresponsiveness to stimulation.

How does one work with these neurotic styles of relating to space? The foundation of the Buddhist approach to unraveling neurosis is meditation. By sitting quietly and still for a lengthy period of time, one begins to see how the mind works. During that time "problems" are not confirmed or fed by the world around us. This allows an opportunity for gaps to occur in which we glimpse our struggle from the perspective of space, which contains fundamental intelligence. We step out of the I-other drama for a moment. So the practice of sitting meditation involves neither feeding nor repressing thoughts but clearly seeing them without getting caught up in them. Usually, techniques that cut the chain of thoughts are used as aids—attention to a sound (mantra) or the breathing process is most common. Gradually our world becomes more spacious, our dramas less intense and all-consuming. The sitting meditation carries over into everyday life and we begin to see more clearly how we create our worlds.

Unfortunately the sitting meditation discipline is not effective with highly neurotic people. Their mental processes are too speedy and confused to allow much space to develop. So Trungpa has adapted some specialized meditation techniques to substitute for sitting meditation. These techniques constitute space therapy.

In this therapy a person maintains a posture within a specially designed room for a lengthy period of time, usually two forty-five-minute

sessions daily. Attention is focused on the space in the room. The rooms highlight the view of the world characteristic of each neurotic style, and the postures highlight the neurotic response to that world. Of course, the inside and outside, "my response" and "the world's response to me" are intertwining parts of one process. To contract the space around you in response to claustrophobic surroundings intensifies the claustrophobic quality of the outside. To attack space in response to phenomena intensifies their resistance to your clutches, which intensifies your struggle to hold on to them. Likewise, *straining* to know panoramically narrows one's perspective, which in turn leads to greater strain.

In each case, struggle intensifies the solidity of the barrier, the imbalance of inside and outside, and the vulnerability and impoverishment of inside. From moment to moment one is faced with the alternative of letting go, of opening to a saner, more balanced relationship to the world, or panicking and intensifying the struggle to manipulate it.

The long period of holding the posture, the monotony of the surroundings, and the task of attending to space allow the possibility of being less caught up in habitual thought patterns. Furthermore, the postures are all somewhat uncomfortable and therefore demand attention to the body and ground as well. These conditions can break the chain of thoughts sufficiently so that a person glimpses his neurotic relationship to space. He may come to realize that the "external world" is always the same in these rooms and therefore his shifting perceptions of the room are his own creation. This insight may allow him to relax his struggle with space sufficiently to glimpse a sane way of relating to it.

In the vajra posture one lies belly down, hands extended to the sides, palms flat on the ground, and face to the side. In the vajra room the windows are small slits along the wall. Since a person with vajra neurosis is always scanning his surroundings, facing the ground and looking at windows that only tease him can be very frustrating. He doesn't know what is above him or outside the room. The positions and rooms thus force the practitioner to confront how he relates to his world by frustrating or exaggerating his ordinary style. The positive potential in the vajra posture is to discover that you don't have to literally see what is above or around you. There is the conviction that you already know what is happening; excessive confirmation is unnecessary.

In ratna posture the arms are perpendicular to the body, legs are spread wider than in karma posture, and the hands are flat down against

the ground. The ratna room contains a large circular window on one wall. Its color is gold. From the posture one sees the outline of the window without being able to see out. This suggests the possibility of expanding beyond the room, of incorporating the richness outside, but one cannot. Extending the arms and legs as much as possible also suggests expansiveness. But since the richness is outside one's reach, it is very frustrating and poverty-stricken. This exposes the ratna tendency to compensate for feelings of poverty and insubstantiality by expanding its territory to feed itself. In the positive case, one feels rich, the external world doesn't especially need to feed you.

Padma posture is lying on the side, one arm extended out fully and the other resting on the hip. The room is square with large windows on two walls. The room suggests something seductive outside it, and the posture suggests keeping your door open to seduce passersby to come and visit. But nothing passes by, nothing entertaining happens, there is no new presence to feel, your seductive gestures are futile. The positive potential is that one discovers an already existent presence to which nothing needs to be added.

The karma position is lying flat on the back, hands close to the sides, the back of the hand flat on the ground, legs spread apart. In this posture, unlike the others, attention is directed to the arms and legs. The room has a four-by-four-foot square window on top and is colored green. Attending to the limbs accentuates the karma tendency toward movement and the window high above invites thrusting movement toward it. Thus, the karmic tendency to speedy movement is exaggerated. Furthermore, being forced to lie on the ground, motionless, frustrates the impulse to activity and heightens the karma fear of vulnerability. The space seems to be cutting through you. The positive potential in this posture is that one gives up the struggling to defend oneself by jumping about and realizes that space is not attacking one and one need not attack space.

Buddha posture is resting on one's knees and elbows, chin between the palms of the hands. The room is small with no windows, a low ceiling, dim light, and is colored white. The posture suggests contraction, drawing inward, protecting by closing up. The room reflects the ignoring of environment, the creating of a closed, secure space to cope with an acute sense of claustrophobia. Positively, one discovers the possibility of being open even in such a potentially claustrophobic situation.

The diagnosis to determine suitable rooms and postures is based on

principles of Tibetan yoga. Specific areas of the body are associated with particular buddha families. The limbs and genitals with karma, the lower abdomen with ratna, chest and heart region with vajra, the neck and throat with padma, and the head with buddha. A neurotic problem manifests physically as an intensification of energy in a particular area. This intensification is a compensation for feelings of vulnerability in that area. Before the diagnosis, the staff member sits quietly for a short period to increase his sensitivity. The patient lies with his back to the ground and a staff member moves his hands slowly from head to toe about two inches above him. He looks for areas of greater and lesser resistance to his hands. Increases in pressure suggest intensified energy, solidified defenses against vulnerability. Since staff members have neurotic association with particular body areas themselves, a consensus of all staff members is used in determining the diagnosis. During the week in which the diagnosis is conducted, the staff observe the patient in the daily life situation but no attempt is made to observe symptoms in terms of buddha families. The insecurity and uncertainty of the therapist concerning who the new person is and how he will deal with him can lead to prematurely defining the situation. Instead the staff is encouraged to respond to the person as a totality, rather than a set of familiar traits.

Dealing with the fundamentals of the mind needs to be supplemented with daily-life practice in which the historically unique blocks and deceptions of a person are worked through—his relation to work, parents, sex, identity, hopes and fears, etc. The key to an effective daily-life practice is the development of an environment of sanity. The basic premise is that if the staff can act sanely in relation to each other and patients, then the social milieu will be therapeutic. An environment of sanity breaks the reciprocal buildup of neurosis. The high percentage of staff in the community facilitates this process.

To realize a sane community, the staff must practice a very demanding discipline. In addition to participating in sitting meditation and space therapy, the staff must discipline themselves to work with their own neurosis as it arises in daily life. The staff discipline is to not get caught in the neurotic games that the patient is trying to play with them. This requires, on the part of the therapist, an acute sense of his own vulnerability to seduction or irritation. Much of the energy of staff, therefore, is directed to working with each other's neuroses. The usual ego props of therapists are stripped away. The staff is sensitive to any tendency to

secure territory. On a social level, jobs are rotated and decisions are made democratically. More subtly, the tendencies toward status building and rationalization are guarded against.

Patients are included as part of the community, sharing work and decision making with the staff. The tone of the community is not that sick people are being helped by sane people, but rather, that people with different kinds and degrees of neurosis and sanity are sharing their lives together. Maitri staff see elements of sanity in the patient's actions as well as elements of insanity in their own actions. Moreover, they are willing to open themselves to the patient's neurosis. They find that they take on the patients' neuroses collectively to some extent and cure themselves of it—thereby helping the patient. The Maitri staff consider themselves neurotic people working on their own neurosis by helping others. The idea that helping others is a vehicle for one's own development is deeply rooted in the Buddhist teaching of compassion. Traditionally the Buddhist practitioner takes a vow, the bodhisattva vow, that he will abandon preoccupation with his own development in order to help all sentient beings achieve sanity. He does not protect himself from being contaminated by his patient's neurosis or try to build up a self-image of being superior.

Since patients develop complex, elaborate strategies to cope with a claustrophobic world, the life at Maitri is simplified to cut through the complexity. Manual work and simple social interaction centering around obviously necessary tasks reduces the potential for complicated thought games. Let's do this now! There is a general suspiciousness of too much analyzing and strategizing since analyzing problems or emoting about them usually feeds the fantasy worlds out of which the problems arise. The patients just do the postures and live in the community. The philosophy behind it is rarely discussed. Similarly, among staff there is a danger of using the buddha families as simply an intellectual typology. This one-sided approach is strongly discouraged. The meditation practice of the staff and the space therapy participated in by staff and patients tunes one in to *feeling* and *seeing* one's own and other's world-creating patterns. The ideal is an integration of intellect and intuition, a balancing between spontaneity and deliberate action, abstract ideas and gut feelings.

The staff further work through the patient's fantasy world by not feeding it. In this case the staff give a patient space to explore his hopes, fears, and reactions without immediate censure. Neuroses are not

repressed or indulged—they are openly recognized but not necessarily acted out. The proper attitude toward them is to see and feel the emotion or fantasy arising and cut through its neurotic aspect. To just act it out and expect cathartic release is not enough, one must see the root of the neuroses, the heavy hand of ego. Whether the therapist exaggerates, mirrors, confronts, allows, or smooths over neurosis depends upon what he feels is appropriate in a situation. Such actions are spontaneous responses to the ongoing life situation rather than prearranged therapeutic strategies. Aside from the rooms and postures, no techniques are used. The danger of using too many gimmicks is that they become a substitute for living, an entertaining and often dramatic highlight in one's day. Following this emphasis on ordinary life, patients are encouraged to visit family and friends, to leave Maitri and live ordinary lives, and then return at a later time. Staff are rotated frequently to keep them from developing an ingrown, therapeutic mentality.

Whether the therapist exposes the patient's games directly, or mirrors them by nonparticipation, or encourages in a sane direction, the key to his effectiveness is his willingness to work with his own vulnerability. Since according to the Buddhist view, neurosis is multidimensional, that is, there are more and more subtle layers of neurosis, or conversely various degrees of relative sanity, any attempt to solidify or secure ego at some level of relative sanity is considered neurotic. So the therapist can never rest on his achievement of sanity. He assumes that he will be acting somewhat neurotically to his patients but goes ahead anyway. He works along with his patient, each on his own neurosis.

GLOSSARY

THE DEFINITIONS given in this glossary are particular to their usage in this book and should not be construed as the single or even most common meaning of a specific term.

abhidharma (Skt.): The systematic and detailed analysis of mind, including both mental process and contents. Also, the third part of the Tripitaka, the "three baskets" of early Buddhist scripture. *See also* Tripitaka

alaya (Skt.): The fundamental unbiased ground of mind.

alayavijnana (Skt.): Arising from the ground of alaya, alayavijnana, the eighth consciousness, is the point at which subtle seeds of bias or duality begin to appear. As such it is the root of samsara.

arhat (Skt.): A practitioner at the highest stage of attainment in the hinayana.

ati (Skt., also *maha ati*; Tib. *dzogchen*): "Great perfection." The ultimate teaching of the Nyingma school of Buddhism in Tibet. Ati is considered the final fruition of the vajrayana path. It is known as the great perfection because in its view the original purity of mind is always already present and needs only to be recognized.

Atisha Dipankara (980/90–1055 CE): An Indian Buddhist scholar at the great monastic university Vikramashila, who was invited to Tibet and spent the last twelve years of his life there. Atisha's main disciple, Dromtönpa, founded the Kadam school. *The Root Text of the Seven Points of Training the Mind*, the main text on mind training and lojong that makes up the book *Training the Mind* by Chögyam Trungpa, is based on Atisha's teachings.

Avalokiteshvara: The bodhisattva of compassion.

bardo (Tib., "in-between state"; "no-man's-land"): A state between a previous state of experience and a subsequent one in which experience is not

bound by either. There are six bardos, but the term is most commonly used to designate the state between death and rebirth.

basic goodness: Unconditional goodness of mind at its most basic level. The natural goodness of alaya.

bhumi (Skt.): "Land." Each of the ten stages that the bodhisattva must go through to attain buddhahood: (1) very joyful, (2) stainless, (3) luminous, (4) radiant, (5) difficult to conquer, (6) face-to-face, (7) far going, (8) immovable, (9) having good intellect, and (10) cloud of dharma.

bodhi (Skt.): "Awake." The path of bodhi is a means of awakening from confusion.

Bodhicharyavatara (Skt.): *Entering the Path of Enlightenment*, by Shantideva. A major text of mahayana Buddhism on how to realize the nature of existence, and the compassion that arises from such realization.

bodhichitta (Skt.): "Mind/heart of awakening." Sometimes called buddha nature, it is the awakened heart and mind inherent in all human beings. Bodhichitta is discussed in terms of absolute and relative, although these two aspects are inseparable. Ultimate, or absolute, bodhichitta is the union of emptiness and compassion, the essential nature of awakened mind. Relative bodhichitta is the tenderness arising from a glimpse of ultimate bodhichitta that inspires one to train oneself to work for the benefit of others.

bodhisattva (Skt.): "Awake being" or "warrior of awakening." A person who has completely overcome confusion and who is committed to the mahayana path of cultivating bodhichitta, wisdom, and compassion through the practice of the six paramitas or transcendental virtues: generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation, and knowledge. The bodhisattva takes a vow to postpone his or her own personal attainment of enlightenment in order to work for the benefit of all sentient beings.

bodhisattva path: Another name for the mahayana.

bodhisattva vow: The formal vow taken to mark one's aspiration to become a bodhisattva and one's actual entering the bodhisattva path of dedicating one's life to all sentient beings.

buddha (Skt.): This term may refer to the principle of enlightenment or to any enlightened being, in particular to Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha.

buddhadharma: *See* dharma.

buddha nature: *See* bodhichitta, sugatagarbha, *and* tathagatagarbha.

crazy wisdom (Tib. *yeshe chölwa*): Absolute perceptiveness, characterized by fearlessness and bluntness, which radiates out spontaneously to whatever situation is present, fulfilling the four enlightened actions of pacifying,

enriching, magnetizing, and destroying. "Crazy wisdom does not occur unless there is a basic understanding of things, a knowledge of how things function as they are. There has to be trust in the normal functioning of karmic cause and effect. . . . According to that logic, wisdom does not exactly go crazy; but on top of the basic logic or basic norm, craziness as higher sanity, higher power, or higher magic, can exist" (Chögyam Trungpa, *Journey without Goal*, p. 138).

dark ages: The five dark ages are (1) when life becomes shorter; (2) when the view is based on corruption of the teachings; (3) when kleshas become more solid; (4) when sentient beings become untameable and difficult to convert to the dharma; and (5) when it becomes a time of sickness, famine, and war.

dharma (Skt.): 1. Teachings or truth, specifically the teachings of the Buddha, also called the buddhadharma. 2. Phenomena in general. Lower dharma is how things work on the mundane level—e.g., how water boils. Higher dharma is the subtle understanding of the world—how mind works, how samsara perpetuates itself, and how it is transcended, and so on.

dharmakaya (Skt.): "Dharma-body." Basic unbounded openness of mind, wisdom beyond reference point. *See also* kaya.

dharmapala (Skt.): "Dharma protector." A sudden reminder that shocks the confused practitioner awake. The dharmapalas represent basic awareness, which brings the confused practitioner back to his or her discipline.

dhyana states: Meditative states of absorption—the experiences of the realm of the gods—which need to be transcended in order to develop wisdom. Although strictly speaking these states can be "achieved" by advanced practitioners, Trungpa Rinpoche sometimes speaks of them pejoratively and warns that they should be cut through. Dhyana, in general, can refer more broadly to meditation and is one of the six paramitas.

dön (Tib.): A sudden attack of neurosis that seems to come from outside oneself.

dorje (Tib.; Skt. *vajra*): A ritual scepter, symbolizing skillful means (upaya), the masculine principle, which is used in tantric practice along with the bell, symbolizing knowledge (prajna), or the feminine principle. Together, bell and dorje symbolize the inseparability of masculine and feminine, skillful means and knowledge. *See also* vajra.

duhkha (Skt.): Suffering.

five buddha families: Five basic qualities of energy in the tantric tradition. The five families refer to the mandala of the five sambhogakaya buddhas and the five fundamental principles of enlightenment they represent. In

the mandala of enlightenment, these are five wisdom energies, but in the confused world of samsara, these energies arise as five confused emotions. The following list gives the name of each family, its buddha, its wisdom, its confused emotion, and its direction and color in the mandala: (1) buddha, Vairochana, all-pervading wisdom, ignorance, center, white; (2) vajra, Akshobhya, mirrorlike wisdom, aggression, east, blue; (3) ratna (jewel), Ratnasambhava, wisdom of equanimity, pride, south, yellow; (4) padma (lotus), Amitabha, discriminating-awareness wisdom, passion, west, red; (5) karma (action), Amoghasiddha, all-accomplishing wisdom, jealousy, north, green. Some qualities differ slightly in different tantras.

Gampopa (1079–1153 CE): The fifth major Kagyü enlightened lineage holder and foremost disciple of the yogin Milarepa. Gampopa combined the Kadam teachings of Atisha with the mahamudra tradition stemming from the Indian masters Tilopa and Naropa.

garbha (Skt.): "Essence" or "nature." *See also* tathagatagarbha.

Geluk (Tib.): One of the four great lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, known as the reform tradition and emphasizing intellectual study and analysis.

Guhyasamajatantra (Skt.): A root tantra of the anuttarayoga tradition.

guru (Skt.): "Master," "teacher."

heruka (Skt.): a wrathful male yidam, or deity, in vajrayana Buddhism.

hinayana (Skt.): "Narrow way"—narrow because it emphasizes self-discipline as the essential starting point on the path. Also sometimes translated as the "lesser vehicle." The hinayana is the first of the three yanas of Tibetan Buddhism. It is subdivided into the shravakayana and the pratyekabuddhayana. The focus of the hinayana is on individual realization through taming one's mind and on causing no harm to others. The hinayana practitioner concentrates on basic meditation practice and an understanding of basic Buddhist doctrines such as the four noble truths.

Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen (1901?–1960 CE): Chögyam Trungpa's root teacher, one of the five incarnations of Jamgön Kongtrül the Great. Chögyam Trungpa described him as "a big jolly man, friendly to all without distinction of rank, very generous and with a great sense of humor combined with deep understanding; he was always sympathetic to the troubles of others."

Jamgön Kongtrül the Great (1813–1899 CE): One of the principal teachers of nineteenth-century Tibet, the author of the commentary on slogan practice entitled *The Basic Path toward Enlightenment*. Jamgön Kongtrül was a leader in the religious reform movement called Ri-me that sought to discourage sectarianism and encourage meditation practice and the application of Buddhist principles in everyday life.

jinpa (Tib.; Skt. *dana*): Generosity. One of the six paramitas.

jnana (Skt.): "Primordial knowledge/wisdom." The wisdom activity of enlightenment, transcending all dualistic conceptualization. One's being is spontaneously wise, without needing to seek it. Jnana is the wisdom which manifests when the mind is no longer obscured.

Kadam (Tib.): The Kadam lineage was founded by Dromtönpa, the main disciple of Atisha, who came to Tibet in the eleventh century. Their teachings place emphasis on monastic discipline and on training one's mind in bodhichitta and compassion.

Kagyü (Tib.): One of the four principal schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The Kagyü lineage is known as the practice (or practicing) lineage because of its emphasis on meditative discipline.

kalyanamitra (Skt.): "Spiritual friend." It is said that in the hinayana one views one's teacher as an elder, in the mahayana as a spiritual friend, and in the vajrayana as a vajra master.

karma (Skt.): "Action." The entrapment of karma refers to the fact that our actions, since they are based on ego-clinging, entrap us in a never-ending chain of cause and effect from which it is more and more difficult to escape.

karuna (Skt.). "Compassion." A key principle of mahayana Buddhism, describing the motivation and action of a bodhisattva, i.e., the practice of the paramitas. Compassion is said to arise from experiencing the suffering of sentient beings, including ourselves.

kaya (Skt.): Literally, "body." In the context of the Kadam slogans, the four kayas relate to four aspects of perception. Dharmakaya is the sense of openness, nirmanakaya is clarity; sambhogakaya is the link or relationship between those two; and svabhavikakaya is the total experience. *See also* nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya, dharmakaya, *and* svabhavikakaya.

kleshas (Skt.): "Poisonous emotions" or "defilements." The three main poisonous emotions are passion (or desire, attachment), aggression (or anger), and ignorance (or delusion, aversion). The five poisons are these three plus pride and jealousy.

koan (Jap.): In Zen Buddhism, a phrase from a sutra, a teaching on Zen realization, or an episode from the life of an ancient master that is given to students to ponder in their meditation and ultimately to "answer" during a student-teacher interview. A koan is not a riddle, in that there is no prescribed right answer. Rather, the student finds the answer, beyond logic, in the nonconceptual space of meditation practice.

lojong (Tib.): "Mind training." Specifically, the practice of cultivating bodhichitta outlined by the Kadam slogans.

lord of speech: One of the three lords of materialism (lord of body, lord of speech, lord of mind), or ways in which we consume our physical, psychological, and spiritual experiences for the further bloating of ego's realm.

mahakala (Skt.): A wrathful dharmapala, or dharma protector. Iconographically, mahakalas are depicted as dark and wrathful deities.

mahamudra (Skt.): "Great symbol or seal." The central meditative transmission of the Kagyü lineage. The inherent clarity and wakefulness of mind, which is both vivid and empty.

mahayana (Skt.): "Great vehicle." The second of the three yanas of Tibetan Buddhism, the mahayana is also called the "open path" or the "path of the bodhisattva." Going beyond the somewhat nihilistic emptiness of the hinayana schools and the preoccupation with individual liberation, the great vehicle presents vision based on shunyata (emptiness), compassion, and the acknowledgment of universal buddha nature. The mahayana path begins when one discovers bodhichitta in oneself and vows to develop it in order to benefit others. The path proceeds by cultivating absolute and relative bodhichitta. The result is full awakening. The ideal figure of the mahayana is the bodhisattva who is fully awake and who works for the benefit of all beings.

maitri (Skt.): "Loving-kindness," "friendliness." In connection with compassion, or karuna, maitri refers to the process of making friends with oneself as the starting point for developing compassion for others.

maitri bhavana (Skt.): The practice of maitri, or loving-kindness. Tonglen practice is also referred to as maitri practice, or maitri bhavana. This term also applies to a monthly practice for the sick conducted at Shambhala centers.

Maitri Space Awareness: A practice developed in the early 1970s by Chögyam Trungpa, which incorporates postures, often done in specially constructed rooms, that accentuate different psychological approaches to perceiving and interacting with the world. Maitri Space Awareness uses the five buddha families, fundamental styles of relating to space, that in vajrayana Buddhism describe both the five wisdoms as well as the energy of confused emotions. Initially, based on discussions with Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, Chöyam Trungpa developed this approach to working with people with severe psychological problems. The postures were intended to be practiced in a therapeutic community designed for the treatment of mental illness. Maitri Space Awareness is now mainly used in workshops and in the contemplative psychology program at the Naropa University, as a means for anyone to explore different qualities, or styles, of fundamental confusion and sanity.

Manjushri: The bodhisattva of knowledge and learning. Usually depicted with a book and the sword of prajna.

mara (Skt.): Difficulties or temptations encountered by practitioners of meditation. When capitalized, *Mara* refers to the tempter who appeared in the form of seductive maidens and frightening warriors just prior to the enlightenment of the Buddha.

Marpa (1012–1097 CE): The third of the great Kagyü lineage holders and chief disciple of Naropa. Known as Marpa the Translator, Marpa was the first Tibetan in this lineage and introduced many important teachings from India into Tibet.

Milarepa (1040–1123 CE): The most famous of all Tibetan poets and quintessential wandering yogins, Milarepa, or the "cotton-clad Mila," was Marpa's chief student and the fourth major lineage holder of the Kagyü tradition.

nidana (Skt.): One of the twelve "links" that form the chain of conditioned arising: (1) ignorance, (2) formations or impulses, (3) consciousness, (4) name and form, (5) the six realms of the senses, (6) contact, (7) sensation, (8) craving, (9) clinging, (10) becoming, (11) birth, and (12) old age and death.

nirmanakaya (Skt.): "Emanation body," "form-body," or "body of manifestation." Communication of awakened mind through form—specifically, through embodiment as a human being. *See also* kaya.

nyingje (Tib.; Skt. *karuna*): "Compassion," literally, "noble heart."

Nyingma (Tib.): One of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

pak-yang (Tib.): Carefree, relaxed mind. Positive naiveté. Trust in basic goodness.

paramita (Skt.): "Transcendent," "perfection," or "gone to the other shore." The essential activities or practices of a bodhisattva, or enlightened being. The six paramitas are generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation, and knowledge or discriminating awareness (prajna). The paramitas are called "transcendent actions" because they carry us across the river of confused existence. They are nondual, not based on ego-clinging.

prajna (Skt.): "Transcendent knowledge" or "perfect knowledge," the sixth paramita is called transcendental because it sees through the veils of dualistic confusion. Prajna is like the eyes, and the other five paramitas are like the limbs of bodhisattva activity. Prajna can also mean wisdom, understanding, or discrimination. At its most developed level, it means seeing things from a nondualistic point of view.

prajnaparamita (Skt.): The paramita, or mahayana practice, of prajna, discriminating awareness. When capitalized, *Prajnaparamita* refers to a series

of about forty mahayana sutras, gathered together under this name because they all deal with the realization of prajna. *See also* paramita *and* prajna.

pranidhana (Skt.): "Aspiration" or "vision."

Rudra (Skt.): In the Hindu tradition, Rudra was an aspect of the deity Shiva. In the Buddhist vajrayana, he is the personification of the destructive principle of ultimate ego. Tradition tells us that he was a tantric disciple who perverted the teachings and eventually killed his guru. Rudrahood is the complete opposite of buddhahood.

sadhana (Skt.): A ritual text, as well as the accompanying practice. Ranging from very simple to more elaborate versions, sadhanas engage the mind through meditation, the body through gestures (mudras), and the speech through mantra recitation.

samadhi (Skt.): "Meditation" or "concentration." A state of total meditation in which the mind rests without wavering and the content of the meditation and the meditator's mind become one.

samaya (Skt.): "Sacred word" or "vow." The vajrayana principle of commitment, whereby the student is bound completely to the discipline and to the teacher and to his or her own sanity.

sambhogakaya (Skt.): "Body of enjoyment" or energy. The environment of compassion and communication linking the dharmakaya and the nirmanakaya. *See also* kaya.

sampannakrama (Skt.): One of the two stages of vajrayana sadhana practice. Having dissolved the visualization (utpattikrama), one rests effortlessly in sampannakrama, or the completion stage of formless meditation.

samsara (Skt.): The vicious cycle of confused existence; the world of struggle and suffering that is based on ego-clinging, conflicting emotions, and habitual patterns. Its root cause is ignorance of our true nature, which is openness beyond the duality of self and other.

samskara (Skt.): Generally translated as "formation" or sometimes, by Chögyam Trungpa, as "concept." Samskara is the fourth skandha and the second nidana. *See also* skandha *and* nidana.

samyaksambuddha (Skt.): Superlative for the Buddha.

sangha (Skt.): The third of the three objects of refuge (buddha, dharma, sangha). In a narrow sense sangha refers to Buddhist monks and nuns; in the mahayana sense, sangha refers to the entire body of practitioners, both lay and monastic.

satipatthana (Skt.): "Setting-up of mindfulness"; the practice of recollection.

self-liberate: *Self-liberated* means freed by itself, on the spot. In the slogan "Self-liberate even the antidote," the sense is that emptiness is free from solidification.

shamatha (Skt.): Mindfulness practice. A basic meditation practice common to most schools of Buddhism, the aim of which is to tame the mind.

shamatha-vipashyana (Skt.): the combination of mindfulness and awareness practice, in which a sense of precision is combined with a more panoramic awareness. Considered to be a more advanced practice than either shamatha or vipashyana alone.

Shambhala (Skt.): "The Shambhala teachings are founded on the premise that there is basic human wisdom that can help to solve the world's problems. This wisdom does not belong to any one culture or religion, nor does it come only from the West or the East. Rather it is a tradition of human warriorship that has existed in many cultures throughout history."—Chögyam Trungpa.

Shantideva (c. 685–763 CE): Author of the *Bodhicharyavatara (Entering the Path of Enlightenment)*, a key text that describes the mahayana path of developing the six paramitas.

shravakayana (Skt.): "Way of the hearers." The focus of the shravakayana is on individual salvation through listening to the teachings and gaining insight into the four noble truths and the unreality of phenomena. The shravakayana can be equated with the hinayana.

shunyata (Skt.): "Emptiness." A completely open and unbounded clarity of mind characterized by groundlessness and freedom from all conceptual frameworks. It could be called "openness" since "emptiness" can convey the mistaken notion of a state of voidness or blankness. In fact, shunyata is inseparable from compassion and all other awakened qualities.

skandha (Skt.): Group, aggregate, or heap. The five skandhas are the five aggregates or psychophysical factors that make up what we generally understand as personality or ego.

sugatagarbha (Skt.): Indestructible basic wakefulness, buddha nature. Similar to tathagatagarbha; however sugatagarbha emphasizes the blissful aspect and the path aspect of buddha nature, while tathagatagarbha emphasizes the wisdom or "isness" aspect. *See also* tathagatagarbha.

Suvarnadvipa (sage of Suvarnadvipa): Atisha's teacher Dharmakirti lived on the island of Sumatra, in Sanskrit named Suvarnadvipa or the "golden island." Hence he was called the sage of Suvarnadvipa. In Tibetan, Dharmakirti was referred to as Serlingpa, "the man from Ser ling" (Tib., "golden land").

svabhavikakaya (Skt.): "Body of self-nature." Total panoramic experience, the totality of the kayas. *See also* kaya.

tantra (Skt.): "Continuity." A synonym for *vajrayana*, the third of the three main yanas of Tibetan Buddhism. Tantra means continuity and refers both to the root texts of the vajrayana and to the systems of meditation they describe.

Taranatha: A noted Tibetan historian-scholar (16th–17th century) who wrote a history of Buddhism in India.

tathagata (Skt.): Literally "thus gone," an epithet for a fully realized buddha.

tathagatagarbha (Skt.): Buddha nature. The enlightened basic nature of all beings. *Tathagata* means "thus come" or "thus gone" and is an epithet for the Buddha; and *garbha* means "womb," or "essence."

tendrel (Tib.; Skt. *pratitya-samutpada,* conditioned arising): The coming together of factors to form a situation. The Tibetan word *tendrel* has an additional connotation of auspiciousness. From the view of sacred outlook, coincidence gives rise to fitting, proper situations.

tonglen (Tib.): The practice of sending and taking, which is designed to reverse ego-clinging and cultivate bodhichitta.

Tripitaka (Skt., "three baskets"): The canon of Buddhist scriptures, which includes the vinaya (the origins of the Buddhist sangha and the rules of monastic discipline); the sutras (the discourses of the Buddha and his immediate disciples); and the abhidharma (a compendium of Buddhist psychology and philosophy).

utpattikrama (Skt.): Visualization practice. One of the two stages of vajrayana sadhana practice in which one evokes awakened mind by visualizing a particular tantric deity.

vajra (skt.; Tib. *dorje*): Adamantine or having the qualities of a diamond. In the vajrayana, vajra is the basic indestructible nature of wisdom and enlightenment. A vajra is also a tantric ritual scepter representing a thunderbolt, the scepter of the king of the gods, Indra. *See also* dorje.

vajrayana (Skt.): "Indestructible vehicle" or "indestructible way." The third of the three yanas of Tibetan Buddhism. The vajrayana emphasizes the attainment of vajra nature, or indestructible wakefulness, and its indivisibility with compassion. The practice of vajrayana emphasizes devotion to the guru, or vajra master. In the vajrayana, buddhahood is presented as already existing, available to be actualized through the skillful means of visualization, mantra, and mudra.

vidyadhara (Skt.): Insight holder or "crazy-wisdom holder." With a capital *V*, an honorific title given to Chögyam Trungpa.

vinaya (Skt.): *See* Tripitaka.

vipashyana (Skt.): Awareness practice. With shamatha, one of the two main modes of meditation common to most forms of Buddhism.

yana (Skt.): A vehicle, in which, symbolically, the practitioner travels on the road to enlightenment. The different vehicles or yanas correspond to different views of the journey, and each yana comprises a body of knowledge and practice. The three great yanas in Tibetan Buddhism are the hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MANY PEOPLE CONTRIBUTED to gathering the material that makes up Volume Two of *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa.* Thanks to Susan Szpakowski for providing copies of the material in *Speaking of Silence,* for permission to include these writings in Volume Two, and for providing copies of articles by Chögyam Trungpa that appeared in the *Naropa Magazine.* Thanks to Hathaway Gamble for connecting me with Sonja Margulies, a founding editor of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology,* and to Sonja herself for so kindly sending me copies of Chögyam Trungpa's articles in the *Journal* and for supplying information on the history of the editing and publication of the material. Thanks also to Miles Vich, who gathered the materials for Sonja, and to the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* itself for permission to reproduce Trungpa Rinpoche's material as well as a related article by Marvin Casper.

Thanks to Melvin McLeod, James Gimian, and other staff at the *Shambhala Sun* for access to the archives of the *Sun* and for help in locating and photocopying articles. Cynde Grieve, the editor of the *Halifax Shambhala Centre Banner,* was very accommodating in my search for original articles by Chögyam Trungpa in that publication. Tom Bonoma at Shambhala Publications photocopied many articles and mailed them to me. At the Shambhala Archives, Gordon Kidd and Cheryl Campbell were very accommodating of my research. Irini Rockwell loaned me several publications to photocopy and had much good information on the history of Maitri Space Awareness. Thanks to all of these people for their help.

At one point, when I discovered that many articles I had hoped to find in the Shambhala Archives were missing, I put an announcement on

"sangha-announce," a list-serv used by many members of the Shambhala International community. Many people responded that they had copies of the articles I needed. To all of them I am very grateful. I would particularly like to thank Derek Kolleeny and Jane Kolleeny, Malcolm Moore, and Wendy Nelson for sending me photocopies of out-of-print articles. Thanks as well to Fabrice Midal, who kindly provided me with a copy of "Space Therapy and the Maitri Community," which I was unable to locate elsewhere. Fabrice referred to this article in his book *Trungpa* on the life and teachings of Chögyam Trungpa, which alerted me to its existence. My apologies if I have forgotten to name anyone else who helped with the gathering of material for Volume Two.

Of the books that are reproduced in Volume Two, one was edited by Sherab Chödzin Kohn and the remainder by Judith L. Lief. I would like to thank them both for their efforts. Additionally, Judy provided information on the history of the editing of these books, which I appreciated very much. Two of the books that appear in Volume Two are published by Vajradhatu Publications. I would like to thank them for permission to reproduce these volumes in full here. Special thanks to Cheryl Campbell and Ellen Kearney of Vajradhatu Publications, as well as again to Judy Lief, who is the editor in chief there.

To Scott Wellenbach and Larry Mermelstein of the Nālandā Translation Committee, my thanks for reviewing the introduction and pointing out doctrinal and historical errors. If any remain, they are my responsibility. To Shambhala Publications, its editor in chief, Samuel Bercholz, and editors Emily Hilburn Sell, Eden Steinberg, and Kendra Crossen Burroughs, and the many other fine people who have had a hand in this project, deepest thanks for the ongoing commitment to publishing the work of Chögyam Trungpa and for support for this series of books. And thanks to L. S. Summer for the index.

To Diana J. Mukpo and the Mukpo family, profound thanks for providing vision and support for the publication of Trungpa Rinpoche's literary work. And most especially and most difficult to express, thanks to the author, Chögyam Trungpa, for his unceasing manifestation of awake mind and for his efforts to establish the buddhadharma in North America.

A BIOGRAPHY OF CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

THE VENERABLE CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA was born in the province of Kham in eastern Tibet in 1939. When be was just thirteen months old, Chögyam Trungpa was recognized as a major tulku, or incarnate teacher. According to Tibetan tradition, an enlightened teacher is capable, based on his or her vow of compassion, of reincarnating in human form over a succession of generations. Before dying, such a teacher may leave a letter or other clues to the whereabouts of the next incarnation. Later, students and other realized teachers look through these clues and, based on those plus a careful examination of dreams and visions, conduct searches to discover and recognize the successor. Thus, particular lines of teaching are formed, in some cases extending over many centuries. Chögyam Trungpa was the eleventh in the teaching lineage known as the Trungpa Tulkus.

Once young tulkus are recognized, they enter a period of intensive training in the theory and practice of the Buddhist teachings. Trungpa Rinpoche, after being enthroned as supreme abbot of Surmang Monastery and governor of Surmang District, began a period of training that would last eighteen years, until his departure from Tibet in 1959. As a Kagyü tulku, his training was based on the systematic practice of meditation and on refined theoretical understanding of Buddhist philosophy. One of the four great lineages of Tibet, the Kagyü is known as the practicing (or practice) lineage.

At the age of eight, Trungpa Rinpoche received ordination as a novice monk. Following this, he engaged in intensive study and practice of the

traditional monastic disciplines, including traditional Tibetan poetry and monastic dance. His primary teachers were Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen and Khenpo Gangshar—leading teachers in the Nyingma and Kagyü lineages. In 1958, at the age of eighteen, Trungpa Rinpoche completed his studies, receiving the degrees of kyorpön (doctor of divinity) and khenpo (master of studies). He also received full monastic ordination.

The late 1950s were a time of great upheaval in Tibet. As it became clear that the Chinese communists intended to take over the country by force, many people, both monastic and lay, fled the country. Trungpa Rinpoche spent many harrowing months trekking over the Himalayas (described later in his book *Born in Tibet*). After narrowly escaping capture by the Chinese, he at last reached India in 1959. While in India, Trungpa Rinpoche was appointed to serve as spiritual adviser to the Young Lamas Home School in Delhi, India. He served in this capacity from 1959 to 1963.

Trungpa Rinpoche's opportunity to emigrate to the West came when he received a Spaulding sponsorship to attend Oxford University. At Oxford he studied comparative religion, philosophy, history, and fine arts. He also studied Japanese flower arranging, receiving a degree from the Sogetsu School. While in England, Trungpa Rinpoche began to instruct Western students in the dharma, and in 1967 he founded the Samye Ling Meditation Center in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. During this period, he also published his first two books, both in English: *Born in Tibet* (1966) and *Meditation in Action* (1969).

In 1968 Trungpa Rinpoche traveled to Bhutan, where he entered into a solitary meditation retreat. While on retreat, Rinpoche received[1] a pivotal text for all of his teaching in the West, "The Sadhana of Mahamudra," a text that documents the spiritual degeneration of modern times and its antidote, genuine spirituality that leads to the experience of naked and luminous mind. This retreat marked a pivotal change in his approach to teaching. Soon after returning to England, he became a layper-

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1. In Tibet, there is a well-documented tradition of teachers discovering or "receiving" texts that are believed to have been buried, some of them in the realm of space, by Padmasambhava, who is regarded as the father of Buddhism in Tibet. Teachers who find what Padmasambhava left hidden for the beings of future ages, which may be objects or physical texts hidden in rocks, lakes, and other locations, are referred to as tertöns, and the materials they find are known as terma. Chgyam Trungpa was already known as a tertön in Tibet.

son, putting aside his monastic robes and dressing in ordinary Western attire. In 1970 he married a young Englishwoman, Diana Pybus, and together they left Scotland and moved to North America. Many of his early students and his Tibetan colleagues found these changes shocking and upsetting. However, he expressed a conviction that in order for the dharma to take root in the West, it needed to be taught free from cultural trappings and religious fascination.

During the seventies, America was in a period of political and cultural ferment. It was a time of fascination with the East. Nevertheless, almost from the moment he arrived in America, Trungpa Rinpoche drew many students to him who were seriously interested in the Buddhist teachings and the practice of meditation. However, he severely criticized the materialistic approach to spirituality that was also quite prevalent, describing it as a "spiritual supermarket." In his lectures, and in his books *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (1973) and *The Myth of Freedom* (1976), he pointed to the simplicity and directness of the practice of sitting meditation as the way to cut through such distortions of the spiritual journey.

During his seventeen years of teaching in North America, Trungpa Rinpoche developed a reputation as a dynamic and controversial teacher. He was a pioneer, one of the first Tibetan Buddhist teachers in North America, preceding by some years and indeed facilitating the later visits by His Holiness the Karmapa, His Holiness Khyentse Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and many others. In the United States, he found a spiritual kinship with many Zen masters, who were already presenting Buddhist meditation. In the very early days, he particularly connected with Suzuki Roshi, the founder of Zen Center in San Francisco. In later years he was close with Kobun Chino Roshi and Bill Kwong Roshi in northern California; with Maezumi Roshi, the founder of the Los Angeles Zen Center; and with Eido Roshi, abbot of the New York Zendo Shobo-ji .

Fluent in the English language, Chögyam Trungpa was one of the first Tibetan Buddhist teachers who could speak to Western students directly, without the aid of a translator. Traveling extensively throughout North America and Europe, he gave thousands of talks and hundred of seminars. He established major centers in Vermont, Colorado, and Nova Scotia, as well as many smaller meditation and study centers in cities throughout North America and Europe. Vajradhatu was formed in 1973 as the central administrative body of this network.

In 1974 Trungpa Rinpoche founded the Naropa Institute (now Naropa University), which became the first and only accredited Buddhist-inspired university in North America. He lectured extensively at the institute, and his book *Journey without Goal* (1981) is based on a course he taught there. In 1976 he established the Shambhala Training program, a series of seminars that present a nonsectarian path of spiritual warriorship grounded in the practice of sitting meditation. His book *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* (1984) gives an overview of the Shambhala teachings.

In 1976 Trungpa Rinpoche appointed Ösel Tendzin (Thomas F. Rich) as his Vajra Regent, or dharma heir. Ösel Tendzin worked closely with Trungpa Rinpoche in the administration of Vajradhatu and Shambhala Training. He taught extensively from 1976 until his death in 1990 and is the author of *Buddha in the Palm of Your Hand*.

Trungpa Rinpoche was also active in the field of translation. Working with Francesca Fremantle, he rendered a new translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which was published in 1975. Later he formed the Nālandā Translation Committee in order to translate texts and liturgies for his own students as well as to make important texts available publicly.

In 1979 Trungpa Rinpoche conducted a ceremony empowering his eldest son, Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, as his successor in the Shambhala lineage. At that time he gave him the title of Sawang ("Earth Lord").

Trungpa Rinpoche was also known for his interest in the arts and particularly for his insights into the relationship between contemplative discipline and the artistic process. Two books published since his death—*The Art of Calligraphy* (1994) and *Dharma Art* (1996)—present this aspect of his work. His own artwork included calligraphy, painting, flower arranging, poetry, playwriting, and environmental installations. In addition, at the Naropa Institute he created an educational atmosphere that attracted many leading artists and poets. The exploration of the creative process in light of contemplative training continues there as a provocative dialogue. Trungpa Rinpoche also published two books of poetry: *Mudra* (1972) and *First Thought Best Thought* (1983). In 1998 a retrospective compilation of his poetry, *Timely Rain*, was published.

Shortly before his death, in a meeting with Samuel Bercholz, the publisher of Shambhala Publications, Chögyam Trungpa expressed his interest in publishing 108 volumes of his teachings, to be called the Dharma Ocean Series. "Dharma Ocean" is the translation of Chögyam Trungpa's

Tibetan teaching name, Chökyi Gyatso. The Dharma Ocean Series was to consist primarily of material edited to allow readers to encounter this rich array of teachings simply and directly rather than in an overly systematized or condensed form. In 1991 the first posthumous volume in the series, *Crazy Wisdom*, was published, and since then another seven volumes have appeared.

Trungpa Rinpoche's published books represent only a fraction of the rich legacy of his teachings. During his seventeen years of teaching in North America, he crafted the structures necessary to provide his students with thorough, systematic training in the dharma. From introductory talks and courses to advanced group retreat practices, these programs emphasized a balance of study and practice, of intellect and intuition. *Trungpa* by Fabrice Midal, a French biography (forthcoming in English translation under the title *Chögyam Trungpa*), details the many forms of training that Chögyam Trungpa developed. Since Trungpa Rinpoche's death, there have been significant changes in the training offered by the organizations he founded. However, many of the original structures remain in place, and students can pursue their interest in meditation and the Buddhist path through these many forms of training. Senior students of Trungpa Rinpoche continue to be involved in both teaching and meditation instruction in such programs.

In addition to his extensive teachings in the Buddhist tradition, Trungpa Rinpoche also placed great emphasis on the Shambhala teachings, which stress the importance of meditation in action, synchronizing mind and body, and training oneself to approach obstacles or challenges in everyday life with the courageous attitude of a warrior, without anger. The goal of creating an enlightened society is fundamental to the Shambhala teachings. According to the Shambhala approach, the realization of an enlightened society comes not purely through outer activity, such as community or political involvement, but from appreciation of the senses and the sacred dimension of day-to-day life. A second volume of these teachings, entitled *Great Eastern Sun*, was published in 1999.

Chögyam Trungpa died in 1987, at the age of forty-seven. By the time of his death, he was known not only as Rinpoche ("Precious Jewel") but also as Vajracharya ("Vajra Holder") and as Vidyadhara ("Wisdom Holder") for his role as a master of the vajrayana, or tantric teachings of Buddhism. As a holder of the Shambhala teachings, he had also received the titles of Dorje Dradül ("Indestructible Warrior") and Sakyong

("Earth Protector"). He is survived by his wife, Diana Judith Mukpo, and five sons. His eldest son, the Sawang Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, succeeds him as the spiritual head of Vajradhatu. Acknowledging the importance of the Shambhala teachings to his father's work, the Sawang changed the name of the umbrella organization to Shambhala, with Vajradhatu remaining one of its major divisions. In 1995 the Sawang received the Shambhala title of Sakyong like his father before him and was also confirmed as an incarnation of the great ecumenical teacher Mipham Rinpoche.

Trungpa Rinpoche is widely acknowledged as a pivotal figure in introducing the buddhadharma to the Western world. He joined his great appreciation for Western culture with his deep understanding of his own tradition. This led to a revolutionary approach to teaching the dharma, in which the most ancient and profound teachings were presented in a thoroughly contemporary way. Trungpa Rinpoche was known for his fearless proclamation of the dharma: free from hesitation, true to the purity of the tradition, and utterly fresh. May these teachings take root and flourish for the benefit of all sentient beings.

BOOKS BY CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

Born in Tibet (George Allen & Unwin, 1966; Shambhala Publications, 1977)

Chögyam Trungpa's account of his upbringing and education as an incarnate lama in Tibet and the powerful story of his escape to India. An epilogue added in 1976 details Trungpa Rinpoche's time in England in the 1960s and his early years in North America.

Meditation in Action (Shambhala Publications, 1969)

Using the life of the Buddha as a starting point, this classic on meditation and the practice of compassion explores the six paramitas, or enlightened actions on the Buddhist path. Its simplicity and directness make this an appealing book for beginners and seasoned meditators alike.

Mudra (Shambhala Publications, 1972)

This collection of poems mostly written in the 1960s in England also includes two short translations of Buddhist texts and a commentary on the ox-herding pictures, well-known metaphors for the journey on the Buddhist path.

Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism (Shambhala Publications, 1973)

The first volume of Chögyam Trungpa's teaching in America is still fresh, outrageous, and up to date. It describes landmarks on the Buddhist path and focuses on the pitfalls of materialism that plague the modern age.

The Dawn of Tantra, by Herbert V. Guenther and Chögyam Trungpa (Shambhala Publications, 1975)

Jointly authored by Chögyam Trungpa and Buddhist scholar Herbert V. Guenther, this volume presents an introduction to the Buddhist teachings of tantra.

Glimpses of Abhidharma (Shambhala Publications, 1975)

An exploration of the five skandhas, or stages in the development of ego, based on an early seminar given by Chögyam Trungpa. The final chapter on auspicious coincidence is a penetrating explanation of karma and the true experience of spiritual freedom.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo, translated with commentary by Francesca Fremantle and Chögyam Trungpa (Shambhala Publications, 1975)

Chögyam Trungpa and Francesca Fremantle collaborated on the translation of this important text by Guru Rinpoche, as discovered by Karma Lingpa, and are coauthors of this title. Trungpa Rinpoche provides a powerful commentary on death and dying and on the text itself, which allows modern readers to find the relevance of this ancient guide to the passage from life to death and back to life again.

The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation (Shambhala Publications, 1976)

In short, pithy chapters that exemplify Chögyam Trungpa's hard-hitting and compelling teaching style, this book explores the meaning of freedom and genuine spirituality in the context of traveling the Buddhist path.

The Rain of Wisdom (Shambhala Publications, 1980)

An extraordinary collection of the poetry or songs of the teachers of the Kagyü lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, to which Chögyam Trungpa belonged. The text was translated by the Nālandā Translation Committee under the direction of Chögyam Trungpa. The volume includes an extensive glossary of Buddhist terms.

Journey without Goal: The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha (Shambhala Publications, 1981)

Based on an early seminar at the Naropa Institute, this guide to the tantric teachings of Buddhism is provocative and profound, emphasizing

both the dangers and the wisdom of the vajrayana, the diamond path of Buddhism.

The Life of Marpa the Translator (Shambhala Publications, 1982)
A renowned teacher of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition who combined scholarship and meditative realization, Marpa made three arduous journeys to India to collect the teachings of the Kagyü lineage and bring them to Tibet. Chögyam Trungpa and the Nālandā Translation Committee have produced an inspiring translation of his life's story.

First Thought Best Thought: 108 Poems (Shambhala Publications, 1983)
This collection consists mainly of poetry written during Chögyam Trungpa's first ten years in North America, showing his command of the American idiom, his understanding of American culture, as well as his playfulness and his passion. Some poems from earlier years were also included. Many of the poems from *First Thought Best Thought* were later reprinted in *Timely Rain*.

Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior (Shambhala Publications, 1984)
Chögyam Trungpa's classic work on the path of warriorship still offers timely advice. This book shows how an attitude of fearlessness and open heart provides the courage to meet the challenges of modern life.

Crazy Wisdom (Shambhala Publications, 1991)
Two seminars from the 1970s were edited for this volume on the life and teachings of Guru Rinpoche, or Padmasambhava, the founder of Buddhism in Tibet.

The Heart of the Buddha (Shambhala Publications, 1991)
A collection of essays, talks, and seminars present the teachings of Buddhism as they relate to everyday life.

Orderly Chaos: The Mandala Principle (Shambhala Publications, 1991)
The mandala is often thought of as a Buddhist drawing representing tantric iconography. However, Chögyam Trungpa explores how both confusion and enlightenment are made up of patterns of orderly chaos that are the basis for the principle of mandala. A difficult but rewarding discussion of the topic of chaos and its underlying structure.

Secret Beyond Thought: The Five Chakras and the Four Karmas (Vajradhatu Publications, 1991)

Two talks from an early seminar on the principles of the chakras and the karmas, teachings from the Buddhist tantric tradition.

The Lion's Roar: An Introduction to Tantra (Shambhala Publications, 1992)

An in-depth presentation of the nine yanas, or stages, of the path in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Particularly interesting are the chapters on visualization and the five buddha families.

Transcending Madness: The Experience of the Six Bardos (Shambhala Publications, 1992)

The editor of this volume, Judith L. Lief, calls it "a practical guide to Buddhist psychology." The book is based on two early seminars on the intertwined ideas of bardo (or the gap in experience and the gap between death and birth) and the six realms of being.

Glimpses of Shunyata (Vajradhatu Publications, 1993)

These four lectures on principle of shunyata, or emptiness, are an experiential exploration of the ground, path, and fruition of realizing this basic principle of mahayana Buddhism.

Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness (Shambhala Publications, 1993)

This volume presents fifty-nine slogans, or aphorisms related to meditation practice, which show a practical path to making friends with oneself and developing compassion for others, through the practice of sacrificing self-centeredness for the welfare of others.

The Art of Calligraphy: Joining Heaven and Earth (Shambhala Publications, 1994)

Chögyam Trungpa's extensive love affair with brush and ink is showcased in this book, which also includes an introduction to dharma art and a discussion of the Eastern principles of heaven, earth, and man as applied to the creative process. The beautiful reproductions of fifty-four calligraphies are accompanied by inspirational quotations from the author's works.

Illusion's Game: The Life and Teaching of Naropa (Shambhala Publications, 1994)

The great Indian teacher Naropa was a renowned master of the teachings of mahamudra, an advanced stage of realization in Tibetan Buddhism. This book presents Chögyam Trungpa's teachings on Naropa's life and arduous search for enlightenment.

The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation (Shambhala Publications, 1995)

A simple and practical manual for the practice of meditation that evokes the author's penetrating insight and colorful language.

Dharma Art (Shambhala Publications, 1996)

Chögyam Trungpa was a calligrapher, painter, poet, designer, and photographer as well as a master of Buddhist meditation. Drawn from his many seminars and talks on the artistic process, this work presents his insights into art and the artist.

Timely Rain: Selected Poetry of Chögyam Trungpa (Shambhala Publications, 1998)

With a foreword by Allen Ginsberg, this collection of poems was organized thematically by editor David I. Rome to show the breadth of the poet's work. Core poems from *Mudra* and *First Thought Best Thought* are reprinted here, along with many poems and "sacred songs" published here for the first time.

Glimpses of Space: The Feminine Principle and Evam (Vajradhatu Publications, 1999)

Two seminars on the tantric understanding of the feminine and masculine principles, what they are and how they work together in vajrayana Buddhist practice as the nondual experience of wisdom and skillful means.

Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of Shambhala (Shambhala Publications, 1999)

This sequel and complement to *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* offers more heartfelt wisdom on Shambhala warriorship.

The Essential Chögyam Trungpa (Shambhala Publications, 2000)
This concise overview of Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings consists of forty selections from fourteen different books, articulating the secular path of the Shambhala warrior as well as the Buddhist path of meditation and awakening.

Glimpses of Mahayana (Vajradhatu Publications, 2001)
This little volume focuses on the attributes of buddha nature, the development of compassion, and the experience of being a practitioner on the bodhisattva path of selfless action to benefit others.

RESOURCES

For information regarding meditation instruction or inquiries about a practice center near you, please contact one of the following:

Shambhala International
1084 Tower Road
Halifax, NS
B3H 2Y5 Canada
Telephone: (902) 425-4275, ext. 10
Fax: (902) 423-2750
Website: www.shambhala.org (This website contains information about the more than 100 meditation centers affiliated with Shambhala, the international network of Buddhist practice centers established by Chögyam Trungpa.)

Shambhala Europe
Annostrasse 27
50678 Cologne, Germany
Telephone: 49-0-700-108-000-00
E-mail: europe@shambhala.org
Website: www.shambhala-europe.org

Dorje Denma Ling
2280 Balmoral Road
Tatamagouche, NS
B0K 1V0 Canada
Telephone: (902) 657-9085
Fax: (902) 657-0462
E-mail: info@dorjedenmaling.com
Website: www.dorjedenmaling.com

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Barnet, VT 05821
Telephone: (802) 633-2384
Fax: (802) 633-3012
E-mail: karmecholing@shambhala.org

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Red Feather Lakes, CO 80545
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Fax: (970) 881-2909
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Website: http://ny.shambhala.org/skylake

DECHEN CHÖLING
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Fax: 33 (0)5-55-03-91-74
E-mail: dechencholing@dechencholing.org

Audio and video tape recordings of talks and seminars by Chögyam Trungpa are available from:

KALAPA RECORDINGS
1678 Barrington Street, 2nd Floor
Halifax, NS
B3J 2A2 Canada
Telephone: (902) 421-1550
Fax: (902) 423-2750
E-mail: shop@shambhala.org
Website: www.shambhalashop.com

For publications from Shambhala International, please contact:

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B3J 2A2 Canada
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E-mail shop@shambhala.org
Website: www.shambhalashop.com

For information about the archive of the author's work—which includes more than 5,000 audio recordings, 1,000 video recordings, original Tibetan manuscripts, correspondence, and more than 30,000 photographs—please contact:

THE SHAMBHALA ARCHIVES
1084 Tower Road
Halifax, NS
B3H 3S3 Canada
Telephone: (902) 421-1550
Website: www.shambhalashop.com/archives

The *Shambhala Sun* is a bimonthly Buddhist magazine founded by Chögyam Trungpa. For a subscription or sample copy, contact:

SHAMBHALA SUN
P. O. Box 3377
Champlain, NY 12919-9871
Telephone: (877) 786-1950
Website: www.shambhalasun.com

Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly is an in-depth, practice-oriented journal offering teachings from all Buddhist traditions. For a subscription or sample copy, contact:

BUDDHADHARMA
P. O. Box 3377
Champlain, NY 12919-9871
Telephone: (877) 786-1950
Website: www.thebuddhadharma.com

Naropa University is the only accredited, Buddhist-inspired university in North America. For more information, contact:

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ISBN 1-59030-026-2




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